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ABSTRACT

Roles and functions of senior and front line managers in VET organizations and their approaches to developing management and leadership expertise were examined in order to identify best practices. Based upon mail surveys sent to managers in 1551 registered training organizations (365 responded, for a response rate of 23.5%), 147 telephone interviews, and 10 intensive case studies, there has been an increased focus on the external environment. Some of the external forces providers must face include changing work and policy environments, increased administrative responsibilities, reduced government funding, and increased expectations regarding corporate connections/industry links. Management roles and responsibilities are being redistributed into "flatter" structures, with front line managers taking on many of the strategic roles of senior managers in addition to their traditional operational roles. Four broad approaches to leadership and management development are endorsed by VET managers: (1) formal work-related learning, such as mentoring and work shadowing; (2) informal work-related learning, such as casual meetings and support groups; (3) seminars and workshops; and (4) traditional and short courses. In planning for the future, attention should be given to increasing opportunities for development at senior management level and creating pathways for prospective managers and leaders, most particularly at front line management level. (The appendices, contained in volume 2, include managerial job titles, case studies, and the survey questionnaire. Contains 26 tables, 4 figures, and 136 references.) (MO)

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Leadership and management in vocational education and training

Staying focussed on strategy – Volume 1

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Leadership and management in vocational education and training

Staying focussed on strategy – Volume 1

Dianne Mulcahy

NCVER

Publisher's note

This report has been organised into two volumes. The detailed report of the project is contained in volume 1 while volume 2 which contains the appendices appears on the National Centre for Vocational Education Research's website http://www.ncver.edu.au

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Executive summary

The study and objectives

This project has its origins in a broad recognition among the vocational education and training (VET) community of the changing roles of leaders and managers within VET provider organisations, the changing expertise required to perform these roles, and the need to identify approaches to management and leadership development that might provide this expertise. The specific objectives of the project were to:

- identify the roles and functions of senior and frontline managers in VET organisations
- identify the expertise needed by these managers, and these organisations, to manage and lead
- examine approaches to developing management and leadership expertise and the strengths and limitations of these approaches
- identify approaches to management and leadership, and management and leadership development, that may best serve organisations in the VET sector.

The project involved:

- a mail survey of managers in registered training organisations. A self-completion questionnaire was mailed to executive and senior managers in 1551 provider locations in five states. In total, 365 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 23.5%
- 147 telephone interviews with senior and frontline VET managers from 79 registered training organisations. Approximately 30 interviews were undertaken in each of the five states
- 10 intensive case studies of practices of managing and leading in VET providers, in each of the five states (two in each state). The case studies involved observation of organisational practices and in-depth, semi-structured interviews (50 altogether).

Key findings

Key influences on leadership and management in VET

There has been an increased focus on the external environment as opposed to the internal environment in terms of VET products and services. There are at least seven powerful external forces that providers must contend with today:

- *the changing work environment:* 'People are working harder and stress levels are rising'
- *the changing policy environment:* 'One person [is] employed full time now working … [on] Commonwealth Government compliance issues, tax issues, paperwork issues, forms, all of these kind of things'
- *increased administrative responsibilities:* 'We've got checklists for just about everything that exists'

- *reduced government funding:* 'You have this vision for where your organisation is likely to be with absolutely no certainty that there will be any funding support for that'
- *increased expectations regarding corporate connections/industry links:* 'You have got to have the sort of attitude of wanting to work with industry'
- *increasing use of technology and e-commerce:* 'Reusable learning objects is one of the newer kinds of directions in online learning'
- *increasing expectation in relation to links with other sectors, agencies and organisations; for example, universities, schools, adult community education providers:* 'We have a lot more relationships with other training providers in alliances'.

Policy interventions and initiatives that require compliance have a considerable influence on management and leadership within VET providers. The mutability and uncertainty of the policy environment where new initiatives appear regularly creates pressures for providers. Uncertainty over government funding is the key pressure point in technical and further education (TAFE) institutes and group training companies. Compliance demands on small business management hit small providers particularly hard.

A clear trend to increased adoption of strategic management processes is discernible in VET providers. Strategy concepts can be seen as an attempt to move providers from traditional management models (strictly functional, operational or task-based approaches) to one which is more businesslike and corporate in approach. They can also be seen as an attempt to build key private sector practices into the operation of the public sector.

Market activity defines the operating environment of VET providers. However, a number of VET managers have reservations about the appropriateness of a market structure in vocational education and training. Managers in various states are considering, and initiating, co-operative arrangements not only as a means to 'build up business' but also as a mechanism for developing an alternative method of provision in VET. These managers support a sectoral or systemic approach, rather than competitive, individual, institutional provision. A network-based approach to organisation where linkages between providers take precedence over the providers themselves may be emerging in VET.

Leadership and management roles

The roles of senior and frontline managers in VET providers are expanding. Managers themselves note that 'there is a much more complex range of functions than managers were involved in five years ago'. Senior managers are found to perform five broad leadership and management roles:

- business management and development
- strategic leadership
- change leadership
- people-centred management
- boundary management (external focus).

Unlike frontline managers whose roles are more dispersed, senior managers' roles are relatively integrated. Senior managers also experience more autonomy in their roles than frontline managers. The impact of change has been felt more fully at frontline management level than executive or senior level. Frontline managers' roles are both strategic and operational. Frontline management is 'where the rubber hits the road, as far as doing business is concerned'. Frontline managers perform six broad leadership and management roles:

- financial management
- administration and operational management

- strategic management
- people-centred management
- consulting
- educational leadership.

Ultimately, their responsibilities are financial, human and physical resource management.

Management roles and responsibilities are being redistributed. 'Flatter' management structures and staff reductions have meant that leadership and management is increasingly the responsibility of a wider range of staff: 'We rely on our principal lecturers and advanced skills lecturers to provide leadership to the lecturers now'.

Expertise required to perform leadership and management roles

The capabilities required of senior and frontline managers to perform their leadership and management roles are comparable. The capabilities required of frontline managers were reported to be similar to those described for senior managers 'but to a lesser degree'. Frontline managers in publicly funded VET providers are increasingly required to perform managerial rather than educational/professional roles. VET leaders and managers require expertise in eight specific domains:

- *business management:* resource management; project management; contract management; information systems management and maintenance (for example, implementing systems and standards); planning and budgeting; tendering; monitoring processes and procedures, targets and goals; utilising new technology and conducting e-business
- *business development:* identifying business opportunities; 'looking for breakthrough stuff'; sales and marketing; promoting the organisation
- *strategic leadership:* discerning trends; future-casting; setting corporate directions; promoting a shared vision; undertaking strategic planning; engaging in strategic thinking and taking strategic action
- *change leadership:* creating a vision for change; creating readiness for change; building work cultures that support change
- *people-centred management/human resources development:* interpersonal relations; communicating information; consulting with staff; consulting with 'clients'; including staff in decision-making
- *education management:* co-ordinating and scheduling teaching teams; co-ordinating courses; monitoring learner management plans
- *boundary spanning:* forming productive alliances; consulting, liaising and meeting with industry and community groups; public relations; articulating the value of vocational education.

Leadership and management development

Vocational education and training organisations are characterised by a paucity of management and leadership development activity. Work-based learning or work-related learning, of a formal and informal kind, is the preferred means of development. Four broad approaches to leadership and management development are endorsed by VET managers:

- *work-related learning of a formal kind:* mentoring, coaching, work shadowing, deputising, project-based learning, action learning, experiential learning and one-on-one consultancy
- *work-related learning of an informal kind:* casual meetings, support groups, 'chat rooms for peers', self-directed reading and 'be[ing] somewhere in another organisation [to] gain a perspective on how other leaders operate'

- *seminars and workshops:* participants who are drawn from different sectors can 'cross-pollinate', share ideas and talk, network and problem-solve, using case studies, simulations and scenarios as support
- *traditional courses and short courses:* conducted by various organisations which provide 'formal qualifications in a practical context', for example, Master of Business Administration.

Leadership and management development needs to take teamworking and networking into account. Strong management, it seems, grows out of cross-sectoral activity where information from disparate groups can be gathered and used to support innovation and creativity in vocational education and training.

Sustaining valued leadership and management in VET

Given the heightened responsibilities attaching to managerial roles and the shortfall in leadership and management development in the VET sector, there is a clear need for greater leadership and management support. In planning for the future, attention could well be given to:

- increasing opportunities for development at senior management level
- creating pathways for prospective managers and leaders, most particularly at frontline management level.

Change leadership and change management are the preferred processes for effecting organisational change in VET providers. Sub-cultures are easily overlooked or not taken into account during the process of changing the culture of the organisation. Strong leadership in vocational education and training requires acknowledging a sense of the 'high tension zone'—the complexity of the relationships involved in simultaneous membership of different cultures (for example, business, occupational, professional).

Overview

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a study into management and leadership within providers of vocational education and training (VET) in Australia.

An increasing interest in management and leadership within the vocational education and training sector emerged over the last few years. A number of research projects have been sponsored recently by various bodies, chiefly the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), as part of the Australian National Training Authority's (ANTA) National Research and Evaluation Program.[1] This report presents the findings from one of these projects. Commencing in 2001, the objective of the project was to 'capture' and interpret the main features of the new kind of leader and manager now emerging in the VET sector. More specifically, it aimed to identify the expertise that VET leaders and managers now need in order to perform their leadership and management roles and how this expertise might be best developed. A key assumption underpinning the research was that the roles of managers and leaders within VET organisations are expanding, consequently, new 'knowledge' is required in the performance of these roles.

The research was undertaken by a consortium comprising five universities, two institutes of technical and further education (TAFE) and a community college. Led by the University of Melbourne, the project team consisted of pairs of researchers in each of the following five states: New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

Rationale

Very little is known about management and leadership in registered training organisations within the vocational education and training sector. Recent research has shown that the roles of educational personnel, most particularly education managers, have changed significantly in response to a changing operating environment. The various reform initiatives introduced by governments over the past decade have been the impetus for much of this change (Mitchell & Young 2001; Lundberg 1996; Paterson 1999). As these initiatives continue and their implementation devolves to the organisational level, further significant changes in these roles can be expected. Governance of the public vocational education and training system is also changing under pressure from state and federal priorities. In the emerging environment of autonomous organisations, councils and management must ensure the financial viability of their institutions. This includes developing the relevant organisational capacity to operate effectively.

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1 There were four related research projects running concurrently with this project; namely, *Management and leadership capabilities required of senior managers, directors and departmental heads in VET*, Victor Callan, University of Queensland; *Leadership in vocational education and training: Leadership by design, not by default*, Ian Falk and Tony Smith, University of Tasmania; *Research into the development of a leadership program for chief executives and senior managers in Australian TAFE institutions*, Anthony Tyrrel, TAFE Directors Australia; and *A management model for managers and intending managers for Australian VET providers, and strategies to achieve the model*, Fiona Oliver and Gloria Carmichael, TAFE Directors Australia.

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It is widely acknowledged that those responsible for steering these organisations in the future will need a number of new skills in addition to those general leadership and management skills common to any organisation. Managers and leaders at all levels in VET providers will continue to be confronted by the need to develop enhanced or better skills in order to fulfill their existing and new roles. As layers of middle management are removed from Australian organisations, the responsibility for guiding staff in the pursuit of organisational objectives is increasingly falling to those in first-line management positions. Frontline managers are now understood to fill critical positions within organisations (Karpin 1995; Saul 1995).

Accordingly, the focus of the project was to identify and interpret the main features of leadership and management at different levels within VET organisation—a 'top down' and a 'bottom up' view was sought. Taking the changing context of vocational education and training into account, we aimed to identify the expertise that senior managers and frontline managers now need in order to perform their management and leadership roles and how this expertise might be further developed and sustained.

The project and research questions

The principal purpose of the project as specified in the project proposal was to identify requirements for expertise in management and leadership within VET providers and how these requirements might best be met. Specifically, this project sought to:

- identify the roles and functions of senior and frontline managers in VET organisations, initially through a literature review
- identify the expertise needed by these managers and these organisations, to manage and lead
- examine approaches to developing management and leadership expertise and the strengths and limitations of these approaches
- identify approaches to management and leadership, and management and leadership development, that may best serve organisations in the VET sector.

In the light of the above, the project aimed to address the following four questions:

- What are the roles and functions of senior and frontline managers within VET organisations and how are they changing?
- What are the requirements of VET organisations for expertise in management and leadership, in relation to this change?
- What practices of management and leadership, and approaches to management and leadership development, can best serve these organisations?
- How do we sustain valued management and leadership expertise in the VET sector?

Approach

Framework for research

The research was set within a constructivist framework. The main purpose of constructivist management and leadership research is understanding management and leadership. Thus, the study did not set out to prescribe what VET managers ought to do to make their organisations more effective but rather *describe* what it is that these managers do and what they require in order to do it.

National context and public policy are now important contextual influences on the strategies of organisations, most particularly education and training organisations. Consequently, a key

assumption underpinning the research was that, if we seek to understand management and leadership in the VET sector, we need to take contextual elements into account.

In addressing the questions above, information was collected at three levels, namely:

- *system* or *institutional* level where the structural demands upon VET management posed by various external initiatives and changes (for example, reforms required under the National Training Framework) could be examined
- *organisational* level where organisational practices of management and leadership (for example, organisational learning, continuous improvement, team leadership), and the knowledge and skills which support these practices, could be identified
- *individual* level where the development needs of managers, and the most appropriate means of meeting these needs, could be mapped. The emphasis here was on management development as experienced by individual managers.

Methodology

The study was undertaken in three stages and used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. A mix of methods was employed in order to provide both breadth and depth of understanding. The first empirical component of the research consisted of a postal survey. Questionnaires were mailed to executive/senior managers in 1551 provider locations, in five states (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia).

In total, 365 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 23.5%. Useable questionnaires were returned for 355 sites. A sample of 355 is a sufficient number for analyses.

The largest group of respondents (127 in all) were from public sector providers, principally TAFE institutes. The next largest group of respondents was from the private sector. Of this group, 83 were from private commercial providers with 51 from group training companies. The data were analysed using the SPSS 10.0 package of statistical procedures. Comparative analyses were undertaken of 'key respondent groups'—TAFE managers, managers in private commercial providers and managers in group training companies.

Secondly, telephone interviews (147 in all) with senior and frontline managers were conducted in the five major states. Approximately 30 interviews were undertaken in each of these states. A preliminary analysis of the qualitative data was conducted using manual thematic techniques whereby categories were developed from a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Subsequently, data for all 147 interviews were analysed using the ATLAS.ti 4.1 package of qualitative procedures.

The third empirical component of the research involved intensive case studies (ten) of practices of managing and leading in VET providers, in each of the five states (two in each state). A multi-case study approach was chosen to explore the potentially different perspectives of participants in public VET providers and private VET providers, including non-profit providers. The case studies involved observation of organisational practices and in-depth, semi-structured interviews (50). Interviews were conducted with various individuals at each case site, namely, an executive or senior manager, frontline manager, manager developer (for example, human resources manager, staff development manager), and staff members (two). The interviews were intended to provide a 'thick description' of practices of management and leadership and the knowledge and skills which support these practices.

Key terms and definitional issues

VET-related terms

'Vocational education and training' is usually taken to mean education and training which is designed to prepare people for work or to improve their performance or prospects in their work (Smith & Smith 1998, p.1).

'VET organisations' are organisations which provide education and training which is accredited. The VET sector is now characterised by an increasing variety of providers:

- adult and community education (ACE) providers—funded by government or community-sponsored organisations
- commercial training providers—delivering training to private individuals on a fee-for-service basis, for example, business colleges
- enterprise training providers—providing training essentially for enterprise employees
- group training companies—independent, not-for-profit companies operating on either an industry or regional basis and providing employment for apprentices and trainees
- industry training providers—providing skill-based training to enterprises across an industry
- TAFE institutes or colleges and TAFE providers, for example, the TAFE division of a university
- independent and state secondary colleges.

In the Australian vocational education and training system, all providers of accredited training must be registered as a registered training organisation. Registered training organisations compete for public funding through processes of competitive tendering and user choice. Recent figures indicate that TAFE and other government providers comprise the largest group and attract three-quarters of all VET students (75.5%), while community providers account for 13.0%, and other registered providers, including private providers in receipt of public funds, 11.5% (NCVER 2001b, p.3).

A distinction is drawn in vocational education and training between a provider and a provider location. A 'provider location is a specific training site (for example, institute, campus, or annex) administered by a training organisation for the purpose of providing clients with programs of training' (NCVER 2001a, p.115). Accordingly, data can be collected from various different sites administered by the same training provider (registered training organisation).

Manager and leader: Continuity and change

'Management' and 'leadership' are similar terms in some respects and different in others. Traditionally, managers have been viewed as implementers of strategies and policies (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.101). As a teacher in TAFE states: 'A manager is under the restraints of … rules … There is a structure and a strategy and systems that they have to work with'. In general, they provide order and consistency within an organisation. 'Managers are disciplined planners, budgeters and controllers. They plot who should do what, how it should be done and what resources are necessary' (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.27).

By contrast, leadership is about movement, direction and change. Leaders guide or induce 'followers' to take a certain course. Fundamentally, it is about seeing things differently: 'It involves stretching beyond existing boundaries, beyond the mindset of "this is how we see and do things around here"' (Owen & Lambert 1998, p.357).

In short, management involves continuity, while leadership involves change. Management works within an organisational culture but leadership is concerned with redesigning that culture to

maximise performance (Owen & Lambert 1998). Plans and visions characterise the well-managed organisation. The differences between these roles and practices have been summarised in table 1.

Table 1: Differences between managers and leaders

Managers	Leaders
Administer	Innovate
Have a short-range view	Have a long term view
Ask how and when	Ask what and why
Focus on the bottom line	Focus on the horizon
Challenge the process	Reconstrue organisational capacity

Source: Owen & Lambert 1998, p 358

But there is also a blurring of the distinction between managers and leaders (Campbell 1999), and it is commonly assumed in the literature that both management and leadership skills are required by those who hold leadership positions. The Karpin taskforce concluded that 'the distinction between managers and leaders is increasingly irrelevant in the context of downsizing and flattening organisational structures. In future all managers, irrespective of level, indeed many employees, will need some leadership skills' (Karpin 1995, p.xxxviii). Along with high-level technical skills, the contemporary manager must display considerable leadership characteristics in order to be effective (Viljoen & Dann 2000). Similarly, the managerial role is not viable without leadership (Northouse 2001).

Consequently, and in line with some of the most comprehensive descriptions of management theory (Yukl 2002; Northouse 2001), the terms 'manager' and 'leader' and 'management' and 'leadership' are used interchangeably throughout this report. No hard and fast distinction between these terms is intended or maintained.

Senior manager and frontline manager

Managers at all levels in VET providers will continue to be confronted with the need to develop enhanced or better skills in order to fulfil their new roles, but the particular focus of this research was management at senior and frontline levels. A senior manager was defined as a manager to whom other managers report and a frontline manager as a manager to whom no other managers report. More formally, senior managers were defined as those who have a high-level, specific responsibility such as heading a school, section, or sector. By extension, executive managers were defined as those who have the highest level organisational responsibility, for example, chief executive officers, managing directors, directors.

It should be noted, however, that as levels of management can only be identified in relation to a particular organisational structure, it is not always possible to reach a definite conclusion as to what constitutes a senior management position. For instance, in a recent British study of management in universities and colleges of further education, heads of departments were not included amongst those designated as senior managers (Slowey 1995). Within the context of TAFE in Australia, positions at the level of head of studies have been defined as senior management positions (Rice 2000a).

The term 'frontline manager' has been employed to denote a diverse group within VET organisations who have responsibility for overseeing and co-ordinating the work of others. This responsibility does *not* normally include managing other managers. Frontline managers' responsibilities within VET providers include course or program co-ordination, professional and organisational development, business and industry services, research and evaluation, and budgets and income.

Frontline managers are first-level managers or managers of work teams. They are directly involved at the operational or service end of the organisation. They oversee the actual doing of work; they

really know the work and are in a position to take something of an overview. They are numerically the largest category of managers and are typically staff who are described as:

- ✧ program co-ordinators
- ✧ program managers
- ✧ head teachers (New South Wales)
- ✧ field officers
- ✧ team leaders
- ✧ course leaders, and other similarities.

Management development

Management development is a broad concept, where work experience and learning from others at work are integral parts of the process. Management development has been described as 'the sum of all activities available to individuals, to help them to meet their growth needs and keep the organisation viable' (Jones & Woodcock 1985, p.136). Management development can be distinguished from management education and management training.

Middlehurst uses definitions from Constable and McCormick (1987) to describe three processes:

> Management education—those processes which lead to qualifications
>
> Management training—formal learning activities which may not lead to qualifications
>
> Management development—a broader concept, where job experience and learning from others are integral parts of the process. (Middlehurst 1995 cited in Lumby 1997b, p.359)

Contemporary definitions see management development as generic, encompassing both education and training (Garavan, Barnicle & O'Suilleabhain 1999, p.193). For the purposes of this study, we thought it appropriate to view the concepts of training, development and education as an integrated whole, with the concept of learning as the glue which holds them together (Garavan 1997).

Limitations of the study

The selection of states in which to collect information constitutes one of the limitations of the scope of the study. In the context of management and leadership, different challenges may arise in small states and territories and require strategies and skills somewhat unlike those presented in large states. Financial and time constraints were a deciding factor in influencing the size of the survey, the number of interviews and case studies, and the number of states.

The sample of interviewees for the telephone interviews and case studies in any one provider location was not random or necessarily representative, so its findings cannot be generalised to all VET managers and leaders. As a staff member in a TAFE institute stated: 'I can only really talk about this department and this campus that I'm sitting in'. Nevertheless, around 150 telephone interviews were conducted with senior managers and frontline managers and a further 50 face-to-face interviews were conducted with a cross-section of personnel from various levels of participating organisations, providing a large data set. Moreover, these organisations represented a cross-section of providers in vocational education and training, that is, public VET providers and private VET providers, including private, not-for-profit providers (group training companies).

At no time however, is a warrant taken for generalising more widely than the sites involved in the study. The results are not generalisable beyond the specific samples studied. They are indicative of general patterns of managerial and organisational behaviour that hold across the VET sector, but not definitive.

Literature review

Introduction

Management and leadership in vocational education organisations, both in Australia and overseas, remains relatively unexplored research territory (Rice 2001; Falk & Smith 2001; Gleeson 2001). Little attention has been given in VET research to the changing nature of the role of the VET manager, and the expertise that leaders (and followers) might now need to lead in the VET context. Very little is known about management and leadership in the registered training organisations within the vocational education and training sector. If, as various commentators argue, effective leadership of change in these organisations will become increasingly important for their capacity to survive, the role of managers and leaders is crucial.

The review incorporates a range of research studies in the fields of management, leadership, education, and organisation and looks at the extent to which various theories and practices have been adopted within the Australian VET sector. Different perspectives on management and leadership have been taken into account, including functionalist, socially critical, and postmodern perspectives. Functionalist perspectives, by their nature, are concerned with the dynamics which make management effective and organisations successful. Socially critical and postmodern perspectives move beyond this frame of reference and take in the wider social relations of management and organisation. They are commonly concerned with asking questions about the distribution of benefits from a process/approach/change.

By reference to major works in the field, the review served to establish a theoretical basis for the empirical research undertaken.

Traditional and emergent views of leadership

While conceptually distinct, practices of management and leadership overlap and intersect. As Kotter observes, 'leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile organisational environment' (1990, p.8).

Leadership as transformational

Managers who exercise leadership skills are claimed to be 'transformational'. Transformational leadership is credited with a concern for values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It 'emphasises a leader's ability to create a vision, to bind organisation members to the values of the organisation, and above all, to transform it. Transformational leaders are said to elicit performance "beyond expectation"' (Lakomski 1999, p.5). Leaders and followers unite in pursuit of higher-level goals common to both (Northouse 2001).

Part of the 'new leadership' paradigm, this approach to management has become prominent in contemporary educational administration as a model suitable for confronting the changes faced by systems of school education. It is commonly used in secondary schools and in that context, termed 'self-managing schools' (Caldwell & Spinks 1988, 1992). The particular sets of skills and qualities

required of leaders in these organisations includes strategic thinking and planning, participatory decision-making, and accountability.

Limitations of leadership as transformational

Some researchers have reservations about the attributes associated with contemporary management theory which has glamorised managers and transformed them from bureaucratic time-servers into dynamic leaders. 'The discursively-reconstructed functionary is now a charismatic change agent and risk taker, associated with innovation, corporate culture, and enterprise' (Morley & Razool 2000, p.179). Lakomski, in a recent professorial address, argues that 'rather than studying leadership, we should be studying *effective organisational practice*' (Lakomski 1999, p.10, emphasis in original). She notes that leaders in traditional studies (which tend to examine leadership by studying the attributes, actions, and attitudes of potential leaders) as well as 'new leadership' studies (which are identified with transformational leadership and expressly locate it in the 'heroic' top executive or office bearer), have been considered as superior individuals whose superior knowledge flows down and through the organisation (1999, p.9).

New leadership concepts: The centrality of context

Contingency theory suggests that leading effectively depends on how a leader's style fits the appropriate context (Northouse 2001). Gender differences in leadership and management have also become a significant management and management development theme (Rice 2000a; Prichard 2000a; Shain 2000; Kerfoot & Whitehead 2000; Cole 2000; Leathwood 2000; Whitehead 1999; Smith & Hutchinson 1995). Thus, in a recent study of women and leadership in Australian universities, TAFE and schools, Blackmore and Sachs (2000, pp.2–3) report that 'women continue to move into leadership in middle and executive management more through accident than design, by proven rather than potential performance'.

Leadership as distributed

Leadership is not solely the property of individuals (Falk & Smith 2003). Ogawa and Bossert (1995) offer a view of leadership that does not treat it as the province of a few people in certain parts of organisations, but rather as a quality of organisations—a systemic characteristic (p.225). In their view:

> Leadership flows through the network of roles that comprise organisations. The medium of leadership and the currency of leadership lie in the personal resources of people.
>
> (Ogawa & Bossert 1995, p.225)

New leadership concepts are emerging. These include 'post-heroic leadership' (Huey 1994), 'situated leadership' (Falk 1999) and 'enabling leadership' (Falk 2000) which challenge the notion of the (heroic) transformational leader. Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) argue that leadership is best understood as a distributed practice, stretched over an organisation's social and situational contexts (see also Gronn 2000). Falk (2000, p.2), writing from a community leadership perspective, states that 'leadership is normally distributed, dispersed and diffused rather than concentrated in one or few hands'. In association with Smith, he suggests that effective leadership is 'related to the ways in which a group of people interacts to enable a common purpose to be achieved' (2001, p.8). Somewhat similarly, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001, p.27) claim that leadership 'emerges in and through the interaction of leaders, followers, and situation'.

The studies of management and leadership in the VET sector tend to give priority to management rather than to leadership and, if taking leadership as their focus, tend to treat leaders as individuals who possess certain attributes. Here, leadership is a quality that individuals have apart from a sociocultural context. It is related to organisational roles, or offices, and focussed on positions at

the top of organisational hierarchies. As a consequence, studies of leadership tend to be studies of top-level managers (Ogawa & Bossert 1995, p.228).

Table 2 presents the two broad perspectives on organisational leadership which guided the research reported here. Both perspectives provide useful understandings of leadership and allow scope for differential emphasis, either on factors within the individual, or on factors relating to the broader context and environment.

Table 2: Perspectives on organisational leadership

Person-oriented	Practice-oriented
Focusses on leader characteristics and attributes	Focusses on organisational conditions and practice
Takes position or role as its ground	Takes activity as its ground
Asks what	Asks how and why
Assumes that leadership lies in the hands of a few	Assumes that leadership 'leaks' or flows
Highlights importance of generic skills	Highlights practices specific to local context

New management concepts and practices

The last two decades have witnessed the growth of new concepts and practices in management and management development in Australian organisations. In the Australian public sector in the 1980s, a particular view of management became prevalent (Leggett 1997). This has variously been referred to as corporate managerialism (Yeatman 1991; Marginson 1993, p.56), the new public management (Kirkpatrick, Whipp & Davies 1996), and simply, managerialism (Pollitt 1993). Farnham and Horton (1993) suggest that new public sector management has three main components: tighter control of budgets, the decentralisation of managerial responsibilities, and the strengthening of management functions, including target-setting processes, performance indicators, and appraisal.

New management policies in public organisations have placed importance on active management, performance measurement, and strategic management (Sadler 2000; Bush & Coleman 2000). According to Sadler:

> The key changes to the management of publicly funded organisations include a strategic management focus, a shift to quantifiable output measurement, the devolution of management controls within an agreed performance framework, a preference for private ownership and contestability in public sector service provision, the imitation of private sector management practices and an emphasis on cost-cutting and efficiencies.
>
> (Sadler 2000, p.2)

New public sector management

It is widely argued in the educational literature that the emphasis on efficiency and best ways of achieving outcomes has resulted in education being organised according to business principles. Educators are expected to adopt 'best practice' according to industry standards (Brown et al. 1996). This emphasis differs from traditional client-centred, public service values, based on the needs of clients as interpreted and formulated by professionals (Deem 1998). Hoyle (1995) has argued that there is now a 'new' discourse of professionalism in which skill is given priority over knowledge, and compliance over judgement. Williams (2000) cautions that change concepts borrowed from organisations primarily concerned with production may have limited success in educational, or people-changing, contexts. Schaafsma (1995) also questions the assumption of the management change literature—that theories of change can be transferred from one setting to another.

The pressures for increases in resource efficiency have been greater in the TAFE sector than in schools, and TAFE institutions have been under particular pressure to behave in more entrepreneurial and outward-looking ways. Strong emphasis has been placed on the development

of individuals and management teams as key elements of organisational success (Garavan, Barnicle & O'Suilleabhain 1999). Elliott (1996) claims that in Britain, government pressure has resulted in wide-ranging reforms designed to increase efficiency and meet quantitative performance indicators. Seagren et al. (1994) maintain that cost constraints, public accountability, and increased regulation have also been imposed in community colleges in the United States.

In recent years, the academic literature on public sector educational institutions in various countries has reported on the powerful tendency, as a result of changes in the policy environment, towards managerialism (Holloway 1999; Leggett 1997; Power, Halpin & Whitty 1997; Simkins 2000). But Campbell (1999) argues that despite government promotion of managerialism, in practice education management has not blindly applied business practice to education. Gleeson and Shain (1999), in looking at changing teaching and managerial cultures in further education in the United Kingdom, argue that managerialism is not as complete or uncontested as is often portrayed. They warn against adopting a determinist stance which assumes an over-controlled view of the further education workplace. '[D]evolved forms of managerialism both negate and draw attention to a wide variety of leadership and management responses at organisational level' (Gleeson 2001, p.194). Similarly, Seddon (1997) claims that the contemporary changes in education are often double-edged. Decentralisation and marketisation drive diverse responses and produce unanticipated outcomes, bringing both good and bad together in uncomfortable and confusing ways.

In summary, the new view of management consists of a package of management ideas, skills, strategies and styles. As Leggett notes, it:

> ... holds that management involves a set of generic skills which can be applied to a wide range of contexts. The associated body of knowledge is about 'good' corporate and strategic planning, processes which are seen to be necessary for running any efficient and effective organisation. According to this construction, the chief executive officer does not require a detailed professional knowledge or first-hand experience ... Instead the particular set of skills and qualities required of managers includes being strategic thinkers and planners, being good managers of people and of financial resources, and being responsive and accountable to government and the community. (Leggett 1997, pp.277–8)

Managerial roles and responsibilities

Recent research has shown that the roles of educational personnel, most particularly education managers, have changed significantly as a result of systemic change (see for example, Cranston 2000; Seddon 1999a; Paterson 1999; Gleeson & Shain 1999; Lumby 1997a). The various reform initiatives introduced by governments over the past decade have been the impetus for much of this change (Mitchell & Young 2001; International Labour Organisation 2000; Lundberg 1996; Seddon 1999a, 1999b). Shaw and Velde (2000) argue that reform in Australia is now settling in two broad directions: the fundamental reform of the Australian system of apprenticeships and traineeships and the transformation of upper secondary school so that it delivers education courses which are based upon national industry competency standards. 'These trends have necessitated a growing and expanding need for vocational education managers to acquire managerial and leadership competencies in order to operate effectively in their roles' (Shaw & Velde 2000, p.270).

Diversified roles and responsibilities: Critical issues

Managers' roles and responsibilities in education and training sites are becoming more diverse (International Labour Organisation 2000; Cranston 2000). The range of VET managers' responsibilities has widened and the actual demands of the management role are growing more exigent (Lumby 1997a; Gleeson & Shain 1999). Work expectations have grown, with VET managers' efforts being increasingly directed outwards (Hamerston 1999; Seddon 1999a). Networks and alliances are becoming increasingly important to the way in which business is

conducted (Allen Consulting Group 1999, p.11; Marginson 2000, p.25). Evidence from various studies (see for example International Labour Organisation 2000; Seddon 1999a, 2000; Lumby 1997a) supports the view that the work of educational managers, most particularly senior managers, is now more intense, the emphasis of their work altered, and there has been a devolution of administrative responsibilities. This intensity arises from the increasing need to link with authorities and agencies outside the organisation:

> [E]ducational administrators ... are required to augment their capacity to establish new policy directions at the behest of politicians or the public, create and monitor performance criteria of whole systems, manage reporting and feedback ... and make adjustments in the system's functioning. As a consequence, the forecasting (planning), advisory and communication responsibilities of administrators have increased substantially.
>
> (International Labour Organisation 2000, pp.23–4)

Senior managers and leaders

A small number of studies have looked at the role of senior managers in the Australian VET sector with the purpose of identifying how the various changes have impacted upon their managerial responsibilities (see for example Brown et al. 1996; Lundberg 1996; Rice 2000a, 2000b, 2001). Some of the main challenges, as reported by the managers themselves, included: the management of change itself; a lack of power in the decision-making process; insecurity and uncertainty; a lack of consistency associated with restructuring; inadequate resources; workload; and a lack of time to complete work (Brown et al. 1996; Lundberg 1996; Rice 2001).

Lack of time to complete tasks was a major concern (Lundberg 1996; Lumby 1997b; Rice 2001), despite claims in the research literature that it was important for managers to allocate time for reflective planning. Gasskov (2000) observed that a negative effect of market-based financing, due to competition policy, is that administrators are greatly involved in preparing tenders for public funds and have less time for other functions. The key elements of an increased workload were increased time spent at meetings, increased communication, especially via email, dealing with teaching sections, strategic work, and educational development (Rice 2001).

In both the United Kingdom and Australia, it was alleged that financial and competitive issues had sharply focussed decision-making, led to less open management, and estranged many senior managers from their colleagues (Brown et al. 1996; Randle & Brady 1997; Simkins 2000; Seddon 1999a , 2000). Senior management teams were said to now form a small and cohesive group concerned with the broad policy of the institution (Simkins 2000). 'It appears that a growing divide between teachers and managers is one of the conspicuous features of the new power relationships in both TAFE and schools' (Brown et al. 1996, p.321).

Seddon claims various research projects indicate that:

> Teachers' and managers' work practices have changed ... Work expectations have proliferated, with significant increases in administrative, organisational, and marketing activities. These have shifted the roles that teachers and managers see themselves playing. The institutional redesign processes, and their relay effects through management within different workplaces, have centralised control and authority but increased the responsibilities of staff lower down in organisational hierarchies. The recognition that institutional survival depends on income generation in an increasingly uncertain financial context appears to have been generalised across the workforce. (Seddon 1999a, p.2)

In a further paper, Seddon (2000, p.248) reports that managers in TAFE talk of their organisation's 'struggle for survival', the difficulties of funding cuts and the challenges of managing workplace relationships in which teachers and managers are increasingly understood in 'them–us' terms. She notes elsewhere that significant changes have occurred in the nature of educational organisations, their practices of organising and managing and the way they define and undertake their core

business (Seddon 1999b, p.1). 'Workers in FHE [further higher education] *are* involved in a fundamental reconstruction of the sector from public service to public enterprise' (Prichard 2000b, p.29, emphasis in original).

In polytechnics in New Zealand, governance issues have been identified as having highest priority in relation to the needs for leadership development of executive managers. 'There has been a high demand placed upon CEOs within a deregulated environment and governance issues remain one of the main areas of interest' (Tyrrel 2001, p.14). Lumby observes that since incorporation of the British further education sector in 1993, an unprecedented emphasis has been placed on the need for effective management (1997b). Simkins (2000) claims that the new centrally driven policies emphasise the overall performance of the institution above all other measures of success. Individual leaders are now held responsible for that performance to an unprecedented degree. There has been a transfer of responsibility for policy effectiveness, and likewise for policy failure, from the government to the institutions themselves (Gleeson & Shain 1999; Simkins 2000).

This is not to say that senior institutional managers cannot influence government policy. It is important not to lose sight of the initiatives that individual managers actually take within individual institutions. As Gleeson (2001, p.194) argues in the context of an emerging culture of 'collaboration within competition' in the further education sector in the United Kingdom, 'the danger is one of treating principals and senior managers as victims of funding led or managerialist reform, rather than strategic interpreters of policy in the reconstruction of FE practices at college level'. The principals and senior managers involved in his study mediated changing education policy agendas by creating joint co-operative ventures and links.

Similarly, Lumby (1999, p.71) notes that critics use 'managerialism' as an accusation of 'the inappropriate adoption of business values and practices'. Commenting on the United Kingdom experience, she argues that the term 'manager' is problematic in the (further education) sector, having become associated with 'managerialism', a 'critique which characterises managers as having sacrificed their educational values to a rational, resource-driven approach which does not have staff or students at its heart' (2001, p.13). In association with Tomlinson (Lumby & Tomlinson 2000), she confronts 'the acceptance that all senior managers within the further education sector are functioning in a way described as managerialist' (p.140) and suggests that 'generalisations about senior managers are in any case unsafe given the complexity of human behaviour and the range of college environments' (p.150). Accordingly, the 'theoretical hegemony of managerialism can be challenged' (Lumby 2001, p.13).

Frontline managers and leaders

Gleeson and Shain (1999, p.466), commenting on changes occurring within further education in the United Kingdom, report that, as senior management teams decrease in size as part of cost-cutting, and increasingly concern themselves with strategic planning, 'middle' managers appointed from the lecturing ranks are taking on broader managerial roles: 'they not only manage budgets and people in the pursuit of greater efficiency, but also mediate tensions and dilemmas associated with rapid and unpredictable change'. These findings match other findings on the increasing demands now being made of frontline managers (Paterson 1999; Lumby 1997a; Turcato 1998; Karpin 1995). Among other things, they must 'get the best out of their staff during a time of rapid change, increased competitive pressure and increased uncertainty about job security and future career paths. They must influence, persuade, "sell" new visions, coach, counsel, mediate, and represent the team in dealings with others' (Saul 1995, p.10). These demands may account for frontline managers placing more emphasis than senior managers on introducing change slowly and limiting the amount introduced at the one time (Saul 1995, p.14).

In some cases, flatter organisational structures have resulted in redefined roles for frontline managers. Recent research of management in colleges of further education in the United Kingdom

has indicated that the greatest pressure arises at the lowest levels of management where curriculum managers must exhort staff to teach more students with fewer resources (Deem 1998). In a study of course leaders in the United Kingdom, Paterson (1999) found a major concern was the growing administrative workload and the effect this had upon their teaching. She claims that there is a need to ensure that frontline managers are not used regularly to carry out low-level, non-professional, and routine duties. In another study of frontline management in colleges of further education, Lumby (1997a) reports that, while the use of the title 'manager' is not necessarily owned by all those so named, 'the responsibility of line managers to develop their staff has become the new orthodoxy' (p.353). A competitive ethos has been introduced following incorporation, resulting in pressure to make efficiency gains through the employment of part-time staff.

Responding to new roles

It is widely acknowledged that those responsible for steering VET organisations in the future will need a number of new skills in addition to those general leadership and management skills common to any organisation. An American study into the leadership behaviours of successful vocational education administrators found that while 'there are a number of vocational education administrators across the United States who are quite successful, a certain segment of the administrator population may be only marginally qualified or less than adequately prepared for their current jobs' (Finch, Gregson & Faulkner 1991, p.31). Similarly, Australian studies suggest that VET managers need to be better prepared for their positions and for the higher-level duties they are expected to perform. Thus, Rice (2001) in a study of nine TAFE institute managers from five colleges and an institute office argues that institute managers must be developed and supported in their roles if they are to make a positive contribution to the future of TAFE. She challenges the assumption that managers in TAFE are driving the changes needed in the new operating environment.

Daws (1995) believes that the demand for flexibility and responsiveness combined with the imposition of tighter management structures to ensure accountability, has led to tensions within VET organisations. These tensions have sometimes been experienced differently by those operating at the senior and frontline management levels. At frontline management level, Turcato (1998, p.18) reports that 'middle and senior managers have been quick to recognise that many of their frontline managers do not have the competencies required for today's frontline management role and that these same frontline managers will face an increasing struggle to cope with the demands of management into the future'.

Essential capabilities

The human resource development, organisational and management literatures reflect a growing interest in competence and capability and many organisations are reported to have invested in a range of activities designed to enhance the competencies of managers at all levels (Garavan, Barnicle & O'Suilleabhain 1999). This interest stems, in part, from their quest for competitiveness—their search for new corporate resources of competence and capability and new flexible strategies (Hamel & Prahalad 1994; Hamel & Heene 1994; Prahalad & Hamel 1990). The new operating environment presents particular challenges for VET organisations and their managers and leaders (Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment 2000; Fawcett, Parrott & Strahan 1998). A recently commissioned Australian National Training Authority report presents the view that VET organisations need to become high-skilled and high-performing (Mitchell & Young 2001).[2] Accordingly, VET managers need substantial skills in strategic

[2] The Business Council of Australia defines high performing workplaces as 'workplaces that are characterised by creativity, innovation, flexibility and competitiveness' (2000, p.1). High-performance work organisation is a defining feature of the high-performance workplace. 'A high-performance workplace can be defined as having two or more of the following practices: self-managed teams, problem solving groups, job rotation, and total quality management' (Kirby 2000, p.31).

management and change management (Mitchell & Young 2001; see also Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment 2000, p.77). They need to exercise managerial leadership in the workplace (Business Council of Australia 2000) and to 'find new and better ways of producing enhanced outcomes with fewer resources' (Sadler 2000, p.6). Altogether, there is now a demand for managers who can develop corporate strategy and demonstrate the behavioural characteristics associated with entrepreneurialism, innovation, and enterprise (Sisson & Story 1993).

Various studies have identified the competencies and capabilities required of VET managers and leaders (Desjardins 2001; Tyrrel 2001; Callan 2001a, 2001b; Shaw & Velde 2000). Some of these studies include a gap analysis of the required versus actual levels of proficiency as perceived by these managers. Thus, Shaw and Velde (2000, p.276), in a study of 103 VET managers occupying positions such as head of department, assistant director and VET co-ordinator, found that competency needs lay particularly in areas such as verbal and written communication, a knowledge of organisational culture and procedures, and personal development skills.

More specifically, the results indicated that VET managers needed training in:

> persuasion, conflict resolution and negotiation skills; time and stress management, managing information systems, productivity monitoring; developing an awareness of environmental factors affecting the organisation and strategic planning in order to effectively manage change in a complex environment. (Shaw & Velde 2000, p.276)

In a study of management and leadership capabilities required of senior managers, directors and departmental heads in vocational education and training, Callan (2001a, 2001b) identified five major challenges facing the managers; namely, managing and leading change, personal qualities (for example, the need to be resilient), strategic thinking and alliances, interpersonal and team-building skills and business and entrepreneurial skills. In a follow-up survey of 396 of these managers, Callan found that the major areas of developmental need were in the four capability domains of 'corporate vision and direction', 'achieves outcomes', 'focusses strategically' and 'develops and manages resources'. While the developmental needs of the three levels of managers were generally similar, directors were generally more likely than other managers to identify needs in 'corporate vision and direction', 'achieves outcomes' and 'develops and manages resources'.

VET organisations: Competencies and capabilities

Modern managers are increasingly encouraged to take more responsibility for development, both the development of individuals and the development of the organisation. As Smith (1999) reports, Australian managers are searching for ways of improving the performance of their enterprises by managing the resources of the enterprise better—particularly their human resources. 'It is now increasingly being acknowledged that human resources represent the key competitive advantage for many organisations' (Younger & Hill 1999, p.18).

In a resource-based view of strategy, human resources are strategic capital which can be used for the purpose of attaining competitive advantage. A company's competitiveness derives from its core competencies and core products. These competencies necessarily cross functions, and, in so doing, cut across traditional hierarchies of command and control:

> The hallmarks of the industrial era, consistency and control, and organisations best served by deeply hierarchical models of management with clear lines of control, responsibility and accountability, are being eroded. (International Labour Organisation 2000, p.67)

Ellinger, Watkins and Barras (1999, p.1) claim that, given the emergence of learning organisations, a new style of leadership and management is required: 'This new style of management must shift from a command and control orientation to a facilitate and empower orientation in which leaders and managers focus on the development of people and on facilitating their learning'. Bureaucratic control and one-way communication have been superceded by an emphasis on organisational learning and the collective improvement of quality.

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There is now a demand for managers who demonstrate the capacity to lead learning and development within organisations. In much of the contemporary management and organisation literature, knowledge is conceived as a resource. Learning, in turn, is 'the ongoing activity that enables new knowledge to be created from that resource' (Younger & Hill 1999, p.18). Core competences are the collective learning in the organisation. Core competence is communication, involvement, and commitment to working across organisation boundaries (Prahalad & Hamel 1990).

Inasmuch as organisations are being increasingly challenged to leverage learning through knowledge creation, dissemination, and continuous innovation (Nonaka 1991), they have need of managers with a new body of management knowledge. Clarke and Clegg (1998) claim that managers must now sponsor the creation of 'collaborative cultures, group technologies, supportive infrastructures and sensitive measurement systems to facilitate the effective acquisition and deployment of new knowledge' (p.431).

Using VET organisations as their focus, Younger and Hill (1999, p.17) argue that 'the new attributes that are vital for organisations to have are all centred around people'. They propose a strategy of organisationally integrated learning and development for TAFE organisations. Similarly, Rice (2000a, p.68) claims that TAFE's ability to respond to the challenges of the new training system depends largely upon the people within the organisation, particularly those in senior managerial positions. These managers must create a learning environment that supports learning at a number of levels. They must identify 'staff training and development as strategically important goals of TAFE institutes' (Younger & Hill 1999, p.20). The management competencies required in these institutes are summarised as:

> Strategic and operational planning is regarded as a core management competency, as is leading and facilitating teams, facilitating and capitalising on change and innovation, establishing and maintaining effective workplace relationships and contributing to the development of a workplace learning environment. (Younger & Hill 1999, p.20)

While clear directions for leadership and management within VET organisations are provided in the literature, little attention is given to inter-organisational arrangements, which are becoming increasingly important in VET. The Australian National Training Authority notes that 'the most successful outcomes in VET (including in new apprenticeships, group training and VET-in-schools) have been built from the foundations of partnerships between equal stakeholders' (ANTA 2000, p.19). In the schools sector in Victoria, the management of partnerships has been included as an overarching skill or area of competency in the competency standards that form the basis of the principal class performance and development process (Department of Education, Employment and Training 2001). School principals are now expected to engage their schools in building and maintaining relationships and netwc rks with other schools, education providers and community agencies and demonstrate a contrib ition to a professional culture of collegiality.

Developing leaders, managers and organisations

While management development was once considered to be mainly supportive of the change process, its potential as a major driver of change is now increasingly recognised (Garavan, Barnicle & O'Suilleabhain 1999, p.194). McClelland (1994, cited in Garavan, Barnicle & O'Suilleabhain 1999, p.195) observes that management development is now viewed as one of the key organisational processes intended to deliver successful organisational adaptation and renewal. A 'functional performance' view of management development holds sway in the mainstream corporate and academic literature. As Garavan, Barnicle and O'Suilleabhain explain: 'A functional performance rationale has as its aim the direct improvement of managerial functioning and thereby corporate performance' (1999, p.193).

The view that management development is a strategic activity, and that the development of managers is critical to the development of the organisation as a whole, is now well established.

> HRM [human resource management], in its concern with the integration of people with business goals and strategies, and its conceptualisation of human resources as strategic capital which can be used for the purpose of attaining competitive advantage provides an important justification for management development.
>
> (Garavan, Barnicle & O'Suilleabhain 1999, p.194)

According to Cockerill (1994, p.71), 'dynamic environments in which organisational success is harder to achieve and resources are scarcer mean that we must use approaches to the selection and development of managers which have a demonstrable link to organisational performance'. Competency requirements for management development should be linked to performance requirements in the workplace (Turcato 1998, p.19). Similarly, management learning should be pragmatic and located within the organisational context and reality (Beckett 1998).

Although the Karpin taskforce (1995) recommended linking management learning to the workplace, Beckett suggests there is little research evidence that this has occurred. He asks: 'What do we know about management learning?' and argues that research has been driven by traditional management models based on structures and applied theory which no longer capture the dynamism of the contemporary workplace in which new styles of management are emerging (Beckett 1998).

Development strategies

A multi-stranded approach

Lumby (1997b) found that two main processes were used to identify the developmental needs of managers in colleges of further education in the United Kingdom: a systematic approach based on appraisal, and an *ad hoc* process based on individual initiative and serendipity. The range of forms of development used in the colleges surveyed included short courses, competence-based programs, academic study, and mentoring and coaching. Lumby (1997b) found that short courses of up to 30 hours were the most frequently used form of development in further education colleges which used the competence approach. It was cost that drove the process and the choice of means.

While noting 'the determination to link the development activities more strongly with the strategic priorities of the institution', she concluded that a multi-stranded approach to management development which offers a stimulus to undertake development from several sources (for example, line managers, individual managers, strategic plan, corporate direction) seems realistic in colleges. 'Colleges will need to evolve a method of supporting development which involves matching against not only concrete college goals but also against the underpinning personal development needs of managers' (Lumby 1997b, p.362). Overall, she warns that if the development needs of managers are to be addressed, then the involvement of all managers is crucial:

> The need for a two-way process is indicated, with both senior managers and those at middle and first-line levels acknowledging the nature of the managerial role, its relationship to leadership and the legitimacy of leading teamwork as a managerial role.
>
> (Lumby 1997a, p.349)

Garavan, Barnicle and O'Suilleabhain (1999) observed that no management development would succeed without the support of senior managers. Similarly, frontline management development strategies need substantial senior management support (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2001).

Tyrrel (2001, p.10), in a study of 38 executive and senior managers in Australian TAFE institutions, concluded that 'a range of leadership development experiences will be necessary to meet the needs of senior managers in the VET sector'. In looking at what these managers would like to do in terms of their own professional development, 'the most popular options were in the informal learning

areas of attending conferences, networking … and visiting VET organisations in Australia and overseas' (p.8).

Developmental experiences

The need for effective leadership in vocational education in the United States has long been recognised. Federal legislative mandates have been enacted to provide for leadership development and leadership research. One study of 69 vocational education administrators in 12 states revealed the importance of on-the-job experiences in developing leadership capabilities (Lambrecht et al. 1997). Five types of experiences were identified by successful vocational education administrators as most helpful to their development as leaders:

1. new positions that offer new and/or increased responsibilities
2. special start-up work assignments
3. handling personnel problems like conflicts and firings
4. being mentored, counseled, supported
5. working with a supervisor. (Lambrecht et al. 1997, p.ii)

Somewhat similarly, in a recent Australian study, work-based learning proved to be the most popular methodology for Victorian VET managers (Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment 2000 cited in Mitchell, Henry & Young 2001, p.2). However, Armstrong (1998), commenting on the development needs of public sector managers, cautions that top executives will require experiences other than learning on the job. With the flattening of the hierarchy of management and a reduction in career paths via middle management, they will need to acquire the necessary knowledge and skill using other means (in formal courses, workshops). Saul (1995) argues that it is necessary to create a climate where people feel they have a need for training and feel free from day-to-day demands to participate. In the context of TAFE, Rice (2001) recommends that emphasis be placed on the importance of the role of the institute manager and consideration given to formal and informal programs of development:

> A formal mechanism should be in place to enable all Institute Managers to learn from the experiences of others. … Professional development should be tied to both the needs of the organisation and the needs of individuals within the organisation. An individual needs analysis should be conducted with each IM [institute manager] to determine their deficiencies in terms of competencies required by the organisation (both for their current positions and for positions they may hold in the future). This procedure should be aligned with … career planning. (Rice 2001, p.8)

Conclusion

It would appear from the survey of the literature that the range of responsibilities of VET managers and leaders has widened and the everyday demands of their roles have increased. Various forces for change in the VET sector such as market-based financing, increased competitive pressure, increased institutional autonomy and external scrutiny, new principles of funding, new governance practices, and new management practices have created a demand for a more strategic perspective on management and leadership within VET organisations, most particularly public sector organisations, to assist them to adapt and change.

Throughout the review, emphasis is placed on the need to improve the management and leadership of VET organisations, where improvement tends to mean increasing their operational effectiveness and enhancing their performance. Individual managers and leaders are now held responsible to an unprecedented degree for that performance. Their effectiveness has appeared of central importance and the development of strategies to ensure such effectiveness is an obvious imperative. Managers and leaders in public VET organisations are under particular pressure in

relation to the operational effectiveness of organisations. In Victorian TAFE institutes, it is claimed, devolved responsibility means that there is no one else to take responsibility (Victorian TAFE Association 2000, p.13).

Taking the literature reviewed into account, the knowledge requirements of VET managers and leaders are summarised below. These requirements broadly match the development needs of these managers and leaders as identified in this literature:

- change concepts and practices (for example, organisational change and renewal, change leadership)
- productive working relationships (staff/community/industry links)
- corporate and strategic planning
- business and finance
- customer/quality service (for example satisfying the needs of clients)
- entrepreneurship (for example, marketing, sourcing clients)
- innovation, including educational innovation
- performance management (systems/staff)
- governance
- ethics and ethical decision-making
- organisational learning and development
- staff training and development.

Shaw and Velde (2000, p.271) summarise the development needs of VET managers and leaders, in this way: 'There is a need for training in higher level competence needs such as strategic, entrepreneurial and problem solving and people skills, and the ability to change a culture in an organisation'.

Currently, little attention is given in the vocational education management and leadership literature to the classic concepts of pedagogy and curriculum and associated aspects of educational leadership. Educational leadership can be understood as the 'capacity to nurture a learning community' defined broadly to include a nation, state, system or organisation (Caldwell 2001, p.11). In the schools sector, new initiatives vis-a-vis school-based leadership are currently being taken. As thinking about school-based management has 'matured':

> The concern has shifted to changing classroom practices and the ways in which a teacher professional learning community within the school, along with external systemic supports, can encourage 'authentic pedagogy' which achieves improved student outcomes.
>
> (Lingard, Hayes & Mills 1999, p.6 citing Newmann & Associates 1996)

Research on school-based leadership and management serves to highlight some of the issues and controversies surrounding leadership and management at large as well as identify some gaps in the literature in the area of leadership and management in the VET sector. In striving to sustain valued management and leadership expertise in the VET sector, we might learn from initiatives being undertaken in both business and industry organisations and school organisations. There is a major and urgent need for further research in the VET arena on inter-organisational and educational aspects of management and leadership. The demands upon VET managers and leaders posed by the structural and systemic changes in the VET sector are many and various and require extensive examination. The relationship between management and leadership practice and educational practice, in particular, remains to be explored.

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Data and methods

Introduction

In order to achieve a breadth and depth of understanding in the research, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the study. Furthermore, it is commonly agreed that it is good research practice to obtain data related to a given situation from a variety of sources. Thus, our understanding of situation, participants and actions will be as informed by differences in perspectives as by similarities.

This staged study involved three empirical components. In this chapter, the techniques adopted in each of these components are outlined and results describing the characteristics of those who participated in the study presented. Accordingly, we will focus on demographic data analysis as a backdrop to the further and substantive analyses reported in the next chapter.

The survey questionnaire

A review of management and leadership research was used to guide the development of a survey questionnaire (see appendix F in volume 2 for a copy of questionnaire).

In addition to the demographic items on VET managers and VET organisations, the questionnaire incorporated questions designed to gather information on the attitudes and perceptions of VET managers in relation to:

- the changing operating environment, that is, the challenges that VET organisations have faced in the recent past, and issues relating to management and leadership presented by these challenges ('The VET context')
- the nature and extent of their management and leadership roles, including the tasks and activities that senior and frontline managers are commonly engaged in ('The changing roles of VET managers')
- the skills/capabilities needed to perform these roles and processes for developing these skills ('Responding to changing roles').

The questionnaire included eight closed and five open questions on the themes outlined above. The closed questions also included various items relating to aspects of management and leadership in VET providers which had emerged from the literature review.

Method

The questionnaire was designed to be:

- completed by an executive manager (chief executive officer, managing director, director) or senior manager with responsibility for educational development/training and development
- completed by a VET manager, that is, a manager in a registered training organisation

- ✧ self-administered (completed in the manager's own time)
- ✧ semi-structured, in that provision was made for open questions
- ✧ short, in that it could be completed in under 15 minutes
- ✧ confidential, in that no names were requested and assurances of confidentiality were given in the covering letter accompanying the questionnaire.

A copy of the questionnaire, with a covering letter and a return-paid envelope, was sent to 1551 provider locations, in the states of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia in May 2001. A targeted follow-up reminder, along with a further copy of the questionnaire and a return-paid envelope, was sent to particular provider locations in June 2001. These locations comprised the campuses and offices of institutes of TAFE and group training companies, respectively.

Designing the sample selection

The research sample was composed of three sub-sets of providers—TAFE institutes, private providers and group training companies—and stratified by sector and state. A census of TAFEs (including universities with a TAFE division) and group training companies was conducted. One thousand assorted private providers were also surveyed, mainly private commercial providers, along with some enterprises, and other private sector organisations (for example, industry providers, community not-for-profit organisations). Table 3 summarises the number of provider locations surveyed with respect to type of provider and state.

Table 3: Survey sample—provider locations by type of provider and state

State	Type of provider			
	TAFE/TAFE division of university	Private providers	Group training companies	Total
New South Wales	128	286	47	**461**
Victoria	95	291	61	**447**
Queensland	59	222	26	**307**
Western Australia	48	156	23	**227**
South Australia	56	45	8	**109**
Total	**386**	**1000**	**165**	**1551**

With regard to TAFE institutes, the numbers included institutes or colleges and associated major campuses. Small provider locations such as annexes were not included in the sample. With regard to group training companies, the numbers included metropolitan and regional offices.

Sample criteria

The sample was drawn from lists of registered training organisations supplied by the state training authorities of each of the five major states. Given that TAFE and other government providers[3] comprise the largest provider group and attract 75.5% of all VET students (NCVER 2001b), they formed a key sample group.

Group training companies employ over 14% of all new apprentices currently employed nationally (NCVER 2001c, p.22). Inasmuch as vocational education and training is their 'core business', they too comprised a key sample group. Group training companies have diversified and expanded their roles and functions which, presumably, has created a number of issues with respect to management

3 85% of VET provision is delivered by TAFE and VET-in-schools programs (Falk & Smith forthcoming); universities with a TAFE division account for 40% of TAFE teaching in Victoria (Doughney 2000).

and leadership. According to Cooney (2001, p.2), group training companies offer an alternative form of training provision which 'has been subsumed as simply a form of private provision in the training market, when in fact it is a unique form of provision which, in Australia, merely takes the institutional form of a private training company'.

All in all, the sample was drawn from a variety of sources: public VET providers and private VET providers, including not-for-profit private providers.

Results

In total, 365 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 23.5%. The background or demographic data collected from the questionnaires only will be reported here. Firstly, the characteristics of respondents as a whole will be described. Secondly, the characteristics of 'key respondents', that is, managers in TAFE institutes, private commercial providers and group training companies, will be presented.

Some general comments about the data, the data analyses, and findings are as follows:

- There were 355 respondents, with a small amount of missing data.
- The respondents were principally managers at executive or senior level.
- The respondent organisations were registered training organisations.
- The data for all 355 respondents were analysed using the SPSS 10.0 package of statistical procedures. Particular attention was given in the data analyses to key respondent groups: TAFE managers, managers in private commercial providers and managers in group training companies.

Throughout the report, inferences are based on cross-tabulation and frequency analyses. Chi-squared tests of association were also run in order to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between particular types of provider (and particular types of manager for example, TAFE manager) and particular practices of management, for example, building business, industry and community links.

Characteristics of respondents as a whole

The type of position held by respondents within their organisations was identified variously as:

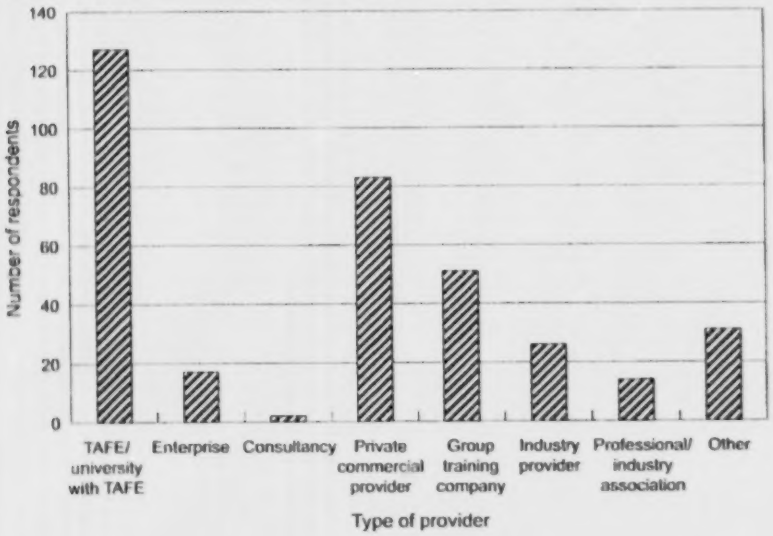
- chief executive officer
- campus manager, director, general manager
- head of campus
- manager
- managing director
- principal
- training manager.

Of the 355 respondents, the largest group described themselves as a chief executive officer (11.3%), general manager (5.6%), director (5.4%) and managing director (3.7%). (See appendix A in volume 2 for the full list of managerial titles.)

Of 342 respondents, 202 were males and 140 were females. Of 351 respondents, the largest group (127 respondents or 36.2%) were from public sector providers, principally TAFE institutes. The next largest group were from the private sector. Of this group, 23.6% of respondents (83

altogether) were from private commercial providers and 14.5% (51 altogether) from group training companies. Figure 1 summarises the number of respondents by type of provider.

Figure 1: Respondents by type of provider



In response to the question: 'What type of training organisation is your organisation?', group training companies were identified in various different ways, namely:

- ✧ group training company
- ✧ industry provider
- ✧ private commercial provider
- ✧ the 'commercial' arm of a 'TAFE' institution
- ✧ not-for-profit RTO (registered training organisation)
- ✧ not-for-profit company
- ✧ group training/business enterprise centre/job network.

The multi-purpose character of these companies and their dual-sector location (the commercial arm of a TAFE institution) suggests that a certain fluidity is emerging in VET around the category of provider type. Interestingly, in group training companies, managers can hold joint positions (for example, joint chief executive officer of a group training company and private commercial provider). This fluidity accounts, in part, for the relatively large proportion of respondents from industry providers (7.4%) and 'other' provider types (8.8%). The bulk of the respondents from the relatively large 'other' category of provider were from private, not-for-profit organisations, including group training companies. For example, in the state of South Australia, respondents from group training companies (two altogether) categorised these companies as 'industry provider' and 'not-for-profit RTO' (which was how they were coded for purposes of analysis).

Of a total of 341 respondents, 59.2% were located in the metropolitan area, 34.6% in the non-metropolitan area, and 6.2% in other locations, which were identified variously as: 'both'; 'mixed rural and metropolitan combination'; 'rural'; 'remote'; 'regional'; 'regional/rural'; 'statewide'; 'all of state'; 'regional and remote' and 'Indian ocean territories'.

By state, respondents were from five major states. As table 4 shows, the largest group of respondents were from Victoria and New South Wales. Of 345 respondents, 28.4% and 27.0%

respectively, were from these states. A relatively small proportion of respondents (7.0%) were from South Australia.

Table 4: Respondents by state

State	Number	%
NSW	93	27.0
QLD	79	22.9
SA	24	7.0
VIC	98	28.4
WA	51	14.8
Total	**345**	**100.0**

A high proportion of respondents were from organisations operating across a number of sites, for example, a number of campuses or a number of regional offices. As table 5 shows, of 340 respondents, 67.6% identified their organisation as multi-site and 32.4% as single site.

Table 5: Respondents by site of provider

Site	Number	%
Single site	110	32.4
Multi-site	230	67.6
Total	**340**	**100.0**

Table 6: Respondents by size of provider

Size	Number	%
10 or less	79	22.7
11–20	32	9.2
21–50	43	12.4
51–100	29	8.3
101–500	89	25.6
501–1000	37	10.6
Over 1000	39	11.2
Total	348	100.0

The high number of multi-site VET organisations may reflect the occurrence of amalgamation, most particularly institutes of TAFE, in some states in the recent past. In Victoria, for example, five TAFEs have merged with universities.

As table 6 indicates, almost half of the respondents (47.4%) were from large organisations (> 100 employees). Inasmuch as multi-site organisations are generally large, this finding is not unexpected. It should be noted however, that there may have been some slippage when specifying size of organisation. Some respondents denoted size in terms of the number of employees at particular sites or locations. Thus, questionnaires were returned with comments like: '(number of employees) at x campus'. Respondents from group training companies, in some instances, included apprentice and trainee numbers in answer to the question: 'How many employees (full-time, part-time and casual) does your organisation employ?'

A sizeable proportion of respondents (31.9%) were from small organisations (< 20 employees). Indeed, 22.7% were from 'micro' organisations. These organisations were typically private commercial companies, a finding which will be discussed more fully below.

Characteristics of key respondents

As table 7 indicates, by type of provider, roughly half of the respondents were from the public sector and half from the private sector. Private sector providers comprised private commercial providers and not-for-profit providers (group training companies). The majority of private sector managers were managers in private commercial providers.

Table 7: Key respondents by sector

Type of provider	Sector			
	Public		Private	
	Number	%	*Number*	%
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	127	48.6		
Private commercial provider			83	31.8
Group training company			51	19.5
Total	**127**	**48.6**	**134**	**51.3**

As table 8 demonstrates, of 251 respondents, 60.1% were male and 39.8% female. More males than females responded to the survey in each type of provider, possibly reflecting the predominance of male managers at senior level which has long been a feature of the vocational education and training (previously TAFE) sector. A little less than half of the respondents from group training companies were female.

Table 8: Key respondents by gender

Type of provider	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	Number	%	*Number*	%
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	72	28.7	51	20.3
Private commercial provider	45	17.9	34	13.5
Group training company	34	13.5	15	6.0
Total	**151**	**60.1**	**100**	**39.8**

As shown in table 9, respondents were from the five major states. Of 257 respondents, the largest groups of respondents were from Victoria (28.0%), New South Wales (26.5%) and Queensland (21.4%).

Respondents from South Australia comprised just 7.0% of the sample overall. Given the small sample sizes, no firm conclusions can be drawn in relation to key respondent groups by state. Two questionnaires were returned by managers from group training companies in South Australia. For reasons already discussed, these responses were not included in the sample analysed.

Table 9: Key respondents by type of provider and state

State	Type of provider							
	TAFE/uni with TAFE		Private commercial provider		Group training company		Total	
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*	***Number***	***%***
NSW	29	23.0	26	31.7	13	26.5	**68**	**26.5**
Qld	29	23.0	18	22.0	8	16.3	**55**	**21.4**
SA	13	10.3	5	6.1	0	0	**18**	**7.0**
Vic.	36	28.6	23	28.0	13	26.5	**72**	**28.0**
WA	19	15.1	10	12.2	15	30.6	**44**	**17.1**
Total	**126**	**100.0**	**82**	**100.0**	**49**	**100.0**	**257**	**100.0**

Figures 2 and 3 summarise the number of respondents by size of provider, type of provider and type of site. Over half of the respondents were from large organisations (>100).

The vast majority of the respondents (72.7%) were from multi-site providers. Of 47 respondents from group training companies, 31 were from multi-site organisations.

As noted earlier a sizeable number of respondents were from small organisations (< 20 employees), indeed very small organisations (< 10 employees).

While there may have been some ambiguity attached to the specification of size of organisation in the survey, most particularly for respondents from group training companies (should they, or should they not, include apprentice numbers?), the data demonstrate that the private commercial providers sampled were predominantly small.

Figure 2: Respondents by size of provider

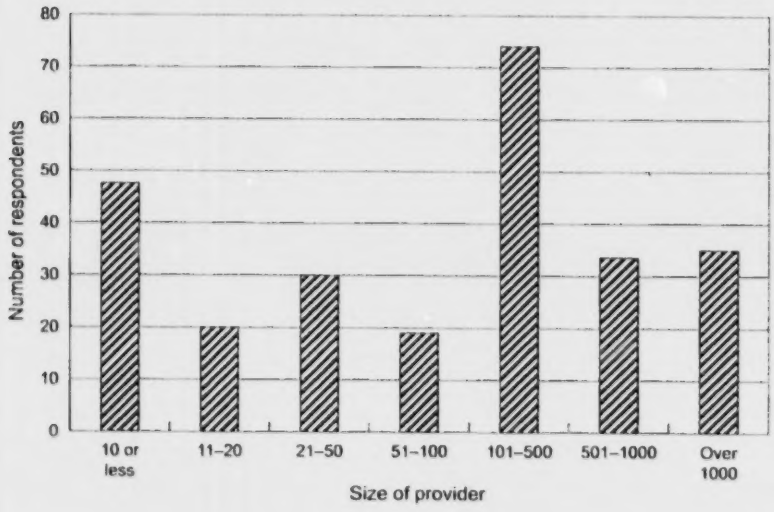


Figure 3: Respondents by provider type/site

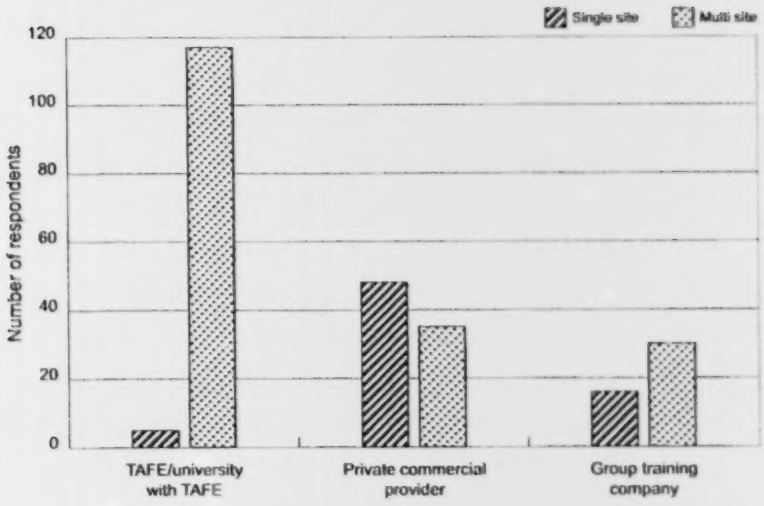


Table 10 summarises the number of respondents according to type of provider and size of provider. Of 257 respondents, 67 were from small organisations. Of these 67 (<20), the bulk were from private commercial organisations (55 altogether).

Table 10: Respondents by type of provider and size of provider

Type of provider	Size of provider							Total
	10 or less	11–20	21–50	51–100	101–500	501–1000	Over 1000	
TAFE/uni with TAFE	2	2	2	6	52	29	32	**125**
Private commercial provider	40	15	14	10	3	1		**83**
Group training company	5	3	14	3	19	3	2	**49**
Total	**47**	**20**	**30**	**19**	**74**	**33**	**34**	**257**

Telephone interviews

The second empirical component of the research consisted of telephone interviews. These interviews were intended to expand the broad body of information obtained through the survey and provide a detailed picture of leadership and management in VET providers from an individual and organisational perspective.

The telephone interviews employed a naturalistic, qualitative approach premised on the idea that individuals construct their own meanings from their lived experiences (Van Manen 1997).

Provision was made for a top-down/bottom-up view of organisational management and leadership. Thus, we sought to gather data from managers with different roles and responsibilities within VET organisations. In essence, we were interested in documenting any differences with respect to management and leadership from a senior management and frontline management perspective. Senior and frontline managers were asked to identify the skills they now need in order to perform their management and leadership roles and to comment on the extent of change to these roles.

In all, information was gathered on the changing nature of management and leadership roles, the impact of these changes on individual managers and the organisation, the expertise required to perform these roles, the requirements of the organisation with respect to management and leadership, what counts as managing and leading in VET organisations, what makes for a 'good' VET manager and leader, the perceived need by managers for management and leadership development, and preferences with respect to this development as well as strategies that might be used (see appendix B in volume 2 for a copy of the telephone interview schedules).

Method

The telephone interviews were designed to:

- be undertaken by an executive or senior manager and a frontline manager, within a registered training organisation
- be semi-structured, thereby making provision for the collection of closed respondent data and open-ended questions (see appendix B in volume 2)
- short, in that they could be completed in under 30 minutes
- confidential in that no names were to be used (assurances were given that responses would be reported in a format that ensured that no individual or organisation could be separately identified).

Selection of sample

The criteria used for the selection of managers and organisations were as follows:

- type of manager that is, executive/senior/frontline
- sectoral location with a mix of public and private sector managers (around 50% of each public sector managers and 50% private sector managers)
- majority of public sector managers to be TAFE managers, including at least two to be managers in TAFE providers, for example, university with a TAFE division
- type of provider; that is, TAFE, private commercial provider, group training company
- provider to be a registered training organisation
- size of provider (number of employees): small/medium/large (small 1–19 employees; medium 20–99 employees; large over 100 employees)
- location by state
- location by area: metropolitan area/non-metropolitan area.

Procedure

One hundred and forty-seven telephone interviews were conducted in the same states as selected for the survey. Approximately thirty interviews were made in each of these states. Participants in the telephone interviews were sourced from the survey. All managers surveyed were invited to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Contact was made with those executive and senior managers who, after completion of the questionnaire, indicated interest in being interviewed. Using a process of snowball referral, each of these managers was asked to identify a frontline manager within their organisation who might be prepared to take part in an interview. These managers were then be contacted and their agreement to participate was sought.

Direct quotations were recorded on the interview schedule and records of interview were made immediately following the interviews.

The demographic data for all 147 respondents were analysed using the SPSS 10.0 package of statistical procedures.

A preliminary analysis of the qualitative data was conducted using manual thematic techniques whereby categories were developed from a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Initially, the data were conceptualised, that is, discrete meanings made in response to the interview questions were given a name. Conceptual labels were then grouped into categories and the categories named. The categories derived from each individual record of interview were compared across the 147 records towards identifying shared themes and areas of difference among managers' accounts (see Ely et al. 1991, in particular, here). Characteristics of different categories were identified for different groups (for example, senior managers and frontline managers).

The 'constant comparative method of analysis' (Glaser & Strauss 1967, pp.101–16) was used throughout.

Data for all 147 interviews were analysed using the ATLAS.ti 4.1 package of qualitative procedures. The records of interview were inductively analysed for themes (Patton 1990, p.390). Accordingly, the themes identified through the manual analysis were cross-checked. A count of the codes used to capture meaning in the data was made.

Results

Characteristics of interviewees

The results in relation to demographic data only will be reported here. As table 11 shows, the largest group of interviewees were executive and senior managers in TAFE institutes and TAFE providers. Four interviews were conducted with managers in TAFE providers (for example, universities with a TAFE division).

By type of provider, roughly half of the interviewees were from the public sector (47.0%) and half from the private sector (53.0%). Managers from the private sector included managers in private commercial providers and managers associated with not-for-profit providers (group training companies). A good mix of each type of manager was achieved.

Overall, a greater number of interviews were conducted with senior managers than frontline managers. In very small providers (for example, private commercial providers), a distinction between managerial levels is not commonly drawn. Consequently, it proved difficult to interview an equal number of senior and frontline managers in all providers.

Table 11: Interviewees by type of manager and type of provider

Type of provider	Type of manager				Total (% of all managers)	
	Senior manager		Frontline manager			
	Number	%	*Number*	%	*Number*	%
TAFE/TAFE provider	38	46.3	31	47.7	69	47.0
Private commercial provider	23	28.1	16	24.6	39	26.5
Group training company	21	25.6	18	27.7	39	26.5
Total	**82**	**100.0**	**65**	**100.0**	**147**	**100.0**

A suitable spread of interviewees across the five states was achieved. As shown in table 12, managers were relatively evenly distributed across the five states.

Table 12: Interviewees by type of provider and state

State	Type of provider						Total (% of all interviewees)	
	TAFE/TAFE provider		Private commercial provider		Group training company			
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*	***Number***	***%***
Vic.	18	25.7	6	15.0	8	20.5	**32**	**21.5**
NSW	9	12.9	9	22.5	11	28.2	**29**	**19.5**
Qld	14	20.0	9	22.5	8	20.5	**31**	**20.8**
WA	14	20.0	8	20.0	6	15.4	**28**	**18.8**
SA	14	21.4	7	20.0	6	15.4	**27**	**18.4**
Total	**69**	**100.0**	**39**	**100.0**	**39**	**100.0**	**147**	**100.0**

A smaller number of TAFE managers were interviewed in New South Wales than in other states. On the other hand, a greater number of managers from group training companies were interviewed in New South Wales than in other states.

Of the 147 interviewees, 58.5% were male and 41.5% female. An almost equal number of male managers and female managers were interviewed in TAFEs. More male managers than female managers were interviewed in private commercial providers and group training companies.

As table 13 shows, a little less than half of the managers from group training companies were female.

Table 13: Interviewees by provider type and gender

Type of provider	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*
TAFE/uni with TAFE	35	40.7	34	55.7
Private commercial provider	23	26.7	16	26.2
Group training company	28	32.6	11	18.1
Total	**86**	**100.0**	**61**	**100.0**

Table 14 illustrates that, more male managers than female managers were interviewed at executive and senior levels. Slightly more than 60% of the male managers interviewed were located at senior management level and above. Slightly less than 50% of the female managers interviewed were located at these levels.

Of the six women interviewed at executive level, four were located in TAFEs, one in a private provider and one in a group training company. Of the 24 women interviewed at senior level, 11 were from TAFEs, seven from private providers and six from group training companies.

Table 14: Interviewees by type of manager and gender

Type of manager	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*
Executive	20	23.3	6	9.8
Senior	32	37.2	24	39.3
Frontline	34	39.5	31	50.8
Total	**86**	**100.0**	**61**	**100.0**

Interviews were undertaken with 147 managers from 79 separate VET organisations. As table 15 indicates, 35 of these organisations were TAFEs or TAFE providers, 23 were private commercial providers and 21 were group training companies.

A balance was sought between large, medium and small providers. As table 15 shows, small providers were under-represented in the categories of TAFE/TAFE provider. They were over-represented in the category of private commercial provider. Overall, a little over half of the organisations contacted for the telephone interviews were large organisations (54.4%). There were very few differences in size of organisation by state.

Table 15: Interviewees by type of provider, size of provider and state

State	Type of provider									Total (% of all providers)	
	TAFE/TAFE provider			Private commercial provider			Group training company				
	Large	*Med.*	*Small*	*Large*	*Med.*	*Small*	*Large*	*Med.*	*Small*	*No.*	*%*
Vic.	9	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	1	18	22.8
NSW	6	0	0	0	2	4	2	2	2	18	22.8
Qld	6	1	0	1	1	3	2	2	0	16	20.2
WA	7	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	1	14	17.7
SA	6	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	13	16.5
Total	**34**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**8**	**14**	**8**	**8**	**5**	**79**	**100.0**

In the context of the location of providers, table 16 indicates that most interviewees were from the metropolitan area. A balance was sought between providers in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas and achieved in the case of TAFE institutes. With respect to private commercial providers, providers in the metropolitan area were over-represented.

Overall, the majority of the managers interviewed were based in the metropolitan area (65.8%). This pattern of representation was similar in each state.

Table 16: Interviewees by type of provider, geographical location and state

State	Type of provider						Total (% of all providers)	
	TAFE/TAFE provider		Private commercial provider		Group training company			
	Metro.	*Non-metro.*	*Metro.*	*Non-metro.*	*Metro.*	*Non-metro.*	*No.*	*%*
Vic.	5	4	3	1	3	2	18	22.8
NSW	2	4	6	0	2	4	18	22.8
Qld	2	5	4	1	4	0	16	20.2
WA	4	3	4	0	3	0	14	17.7
SA	4	2	3	1	3	0	13	16.5
Total	**17**	**18**	**20**	**3**	**15**	**6**	**79**	**100.0**

Case studies

The third empirical component of the research consisted of intensive case studies of organisational practices of managing and leading in registered training organisations (see appendix E in volume 2 for reports of these studies). A multi-case study approach was chosen to explore the potentially different perspectives of participants in public VET providers and private VET providers, including non-profit providers (group training companies).

The ten case studies were intended to provide a detailed understanding of management and leadership roles and their requirements in different organisational settings in the VET sector. Like the telephone interviews, they employed a naturalistic, qualitative approach premised on the notion that individuals construct their own meanings from their lived experiences. The case studies involved:

- *observation of organisational practices:* an observation schedule was developed focussing on skills demonstrated by senior managers and frontline managers as they went about their everyday work; the arrangements for management and leadership development; specific management and leadership practices and the contribution of these practices to 'followers' and the organisation (see appendix C in volume 2 for a copy of the observation schedule.)
- *in-depth, semi-structured interviews:* 50 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with various individuals; for example, senior manager, frontline manager, manager developer (for example, coach), staff members or 'followers'. Interviews were intended to provide a 'thick description' of the conditions that enable effective leadership and management in VET organisations and the skills required to operate in these conditions (see appendix D in volume 2 for a copy of the interview schedules.)

Methodology

Case study sites

The selection of sites for the case studies was made using purposeful sampling to obtain maximum variation and increase the scope or range of data gathered. This sampling involves selecting information-rich cases for study in depth; that is, cases 'from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research' (Patton 1990, p.169). In purposeful sampling, the sample, by definition, is representative of the questions that lie at the heart of the research.

Criteria for selection of the case study sites were designed to ensure the inclusion of a diverse range of VET providers. These criteria were as follows:

- type of provider: TAFE/TAFE provider; private commercial provider; group training company
- size of provider (number of employees): small/medium/large
- location by state: two sites in each of the five major states
- location by area: metropolitan area/non-metropolitan area
- distinguishing features with respect to management and leadership, for example, a provider with a reputation for innovative programs/innovative delivery; a provider that is publicly recognised as well managed and led
- ease of access to site and participant availability given budget constraints.

Table 17 summarises the ten sites from which case data were collected.

Collecting case data

Researchers observed organisational practices of management and leadership over two or three days using a protocol developed for the purpose (See appendix C in volume 2 for a copy of this protocol). Observations were informal and unstructured.

Table 17: Summary of sites by provider type, location, size and organisation

State	Type of provider	
Vic.	Large urban TAFE division of university	
	Small urban group training company	
NSW	(i) Large rural TAFE	
	(ii) Small rural TAFE	
Qld	Large urban private commercial provider	
	Medium-size urban group training company	
WA	(i) Large urban TAFE	
	(ii) Small rural TAFE	
SA	Small urban TAFE	
	Medium-size urban private commercial provider	
Total TAFE/TAFE providers		**6**
Total private commercial providers		**2**
Total group training companies		**2**

Interviews

Five in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in each case study site with the following individuals:

- executive or senior manager
- frontline manager
- manager developer, that is, a person who has responsibility for staff development, with particular attention to management and leadership development
- staff members or 'subordinates' (two altogether). Attempts were made to choose staff who report to either of the two managers immediately above.

Our general method for obtaining interviews was to ask those who had taken part in the telephone interviews (that is, executive/senior managers and frontline managers) to participate in a further interview and nominate other managers and staff who might be willing to be interviewed and who held the positions described above. It should be noted that in some case sites, managers had not participated in the earlier stages of the study, or, those who had done so, chose to recommend another (senior, frontline) manager for interview. We also consulted contacts where possible to seek their recommendations regarding key people to interview.

All interviews were conducted on the basis that we could record, transcribe and quote from them with due regard to issues of confidentiality of information and identification of organisations and individuals. Consent in writing was obtained from those who agreed to participate in the interviews. Particular care was taken when interviewing 'subordinates' of senior and frontline managers. Assurances were given that the information these staff members provided in the interview would be kept strictly confidential. Interviews ran for approximately 45 minutes.

Analysing the data and limitations of the data

The processes used to analyse the case data were similar to those used for the telephone interviews. Thus, the transcripts of interview were inductively analysed for themes. The case data were synthesised into major themes to make the best use of material gathered from different providers and to expressly address the research questions pertaining to the research project. The themes resulting from this interpretive analysis are reported in the next chapter.

Although recurring themes relevant to management and leadership arose in these data, it might be noted that each case is also an individual enactment of management and leadership. Large multi-site organisations such as TAFEs can be organised on a federated delivery model where teams of staff work across campuses, or a faculty delivery model which tends to be college- or campus-based. The model of delivery in place clearly affects the roles and responsibilities of staff and the skills they require to perform these roles. The unit from which the interviewees were drawn—for example, the directorates, the functional units, and the educational delivery areas of the organisation—might also be thought to affect staff perceptions and responses. No warrant is taken for generalising more widely than the sites involved in these studies.

A particular limitation of the case data was that, in the context of group training companies and private commercial providers, no rural sites were sampled. However, a good balance of metropolitan and regional colleges of TAFE was achieved.

Results and discussion

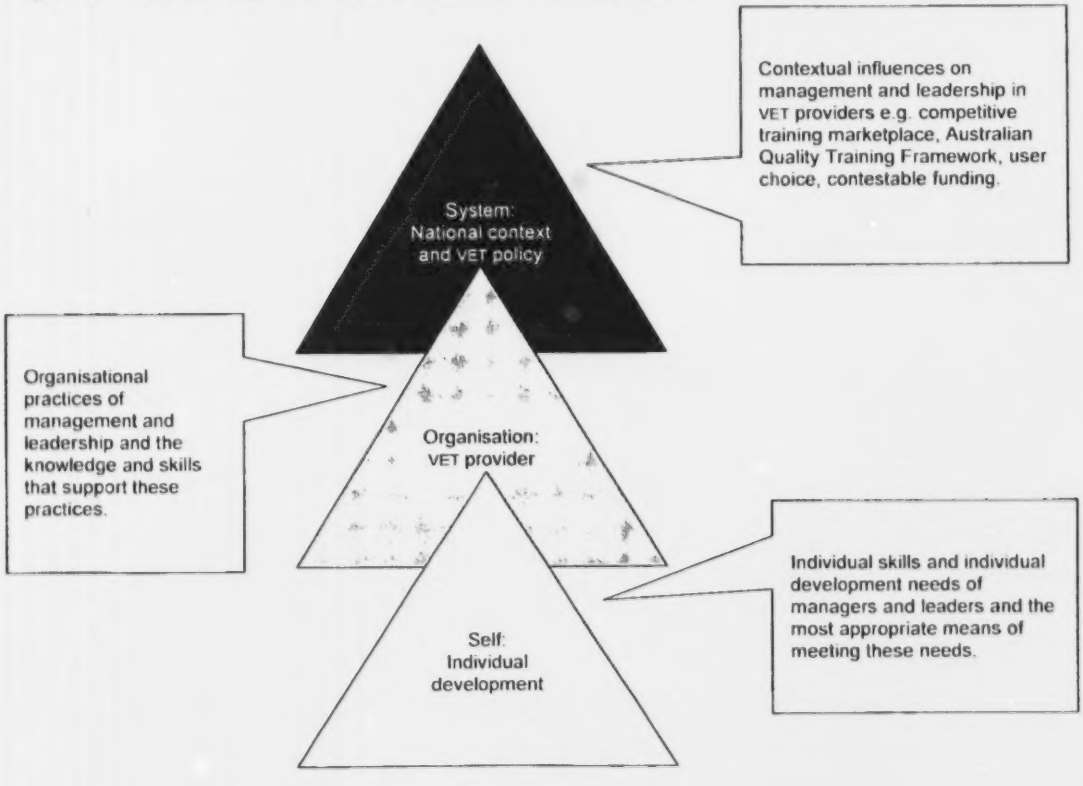
Overview

The project aimed to address the following four questions:

- What are the roles and functions of senior and frontline managers within VET organisations and how are they changing?
- What are the requirements of VET organisations for expertise in management and leadership, in relation to this change?
- What practices of management and leadership, and approaches to management and leadership development, can best serve these organisations?
- How do we sustain valued management and leadership expertise in the VET sector?

In addressing these questions, information was collected at the following three levels. The results reported in this chapter refer to these levels.

Figure 4: Levels of organisational management and leadership in VET


Contextual influences on management and leadership in VET providers e.g. competitive training marketplace, Australian Quality Training Framework, user choice, contestable funding.
System: National context and VET policy
Organisational practices of management and leadership and the knowledge and skills that support these practices.
Organisation: VET provider
Individual skills and individual development needs of managers and leaders and the most appropriate means of meeting these needs.
Self: Individual development

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The findings in relation to each of the four questions are reported as follows: firstly, the key finding and contextual influences on management and leadership within VET organisations will be outlined. The subsequent section 'Individual analyses' includes a comparative analysis of responses to selected survey items by key respondents—TAFE managers, managers in private commercial providers and managers in group training companies. Finally, the contours of the contemporary VET organisation will be sketched as a backdrop to findings with respect to organisational management and leadership. This material is presented in the section entitled 'Organisational analysis'.

Key finding: The salience of strategy

Much of the discussion of the significance of the project's findings revolves around the key finding. Strategy—the strategy concepts that underpin practices of strategic management and strategic leadership—was found to be the main driver of management and leadership processes in VET providers. The majority of managers participating in the study assumed the importance of a strategic approach to management and leadership in VET. Definitions of strategy generally agree it is concerned with assembling the resources available within, or to, an organisation to achieve its future goals (Hutchinson 2001). Broadly, VET managers and leaders were found to be using strategy to better position their organisations by reading the 'policy play' in the VET sector and mobilising resources to achieve an effective response.

The regularity with which the term 'strategy' and the expanded form of the term, 'corporate strategy', were used in the data indicated that it was a key issue for VET providers. Among many others, terms such as 'strategic planning', 'strategic focus', 'strategic framework', 'strategic perspective', 'strategic priorities', 'strategic vision', 'strategic role', 'strategic goals', 'strategic boundaries', 'strategic directions', 'strategic opportunities', 'strategic thinking', and 'strategic action', permeated the talk of managers and staff in providers. Strategy, it appears, is common currency in vocational education and training.

A growing number of commentators in VET note the significance of, and necessity for, strategic management within VET organisations: 'VET organisations need to develop a responsive culture and an appropriate structure, which requires the use of both change management and strategic management strategies' (Mitchell & Young 2001, TAFE Frontiers 2001; Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment 2000). In a formal sense, strategic management may be described as: 'The process of identifying, choosing and implementing activities that will enhance the long-term performance of an organisation by setting direction and by creating ongoing compatibility between the internal skills and resources of the organisation, and the changing external environment within which it operates' (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.5). Strategy is commonly implemented as a set of techniques for managing and leading increasingly complex businesses in an increasingly competitive environment. As a frontline manager in TAFE comments: 'If it doesn't get built in at the strategic level, there is a good chance it won't happen'.

Contextual analyses

Recurring themes and issues

Government policy

Federal and state government priorities and initiatives tended to 'top' the list of contextual influences on the strategies of VET management and organisation. These initiatives impact significantly on small providers and private providers:

> The impact of the GST on VET has been horrendous in the small business area.
>
> (General manager, group training company, Queensland)

> The government and the changing legislation has always been an issue. The government demands of a private institution are very strict—taxation issues, superannuation issues. There are many factors. (Senior manager, private commercial provider, Queensland)

Table 18 provides a summary of the mean ratings for all survey respondents (355 altogether) of challenges which have played a critical role in their organisations. Of the ten given challenges, 'policy', 'partnerships' and 'funding' were rated highly on the 5-point scale, where ratings of 3 represented 'critical' and 5 'most critical'.

Table 18: Challenges facing providers

Challenges	Mean
Building partnerships with business and industry	4.17
Expanding access to VET for disadvantaged groups	2.95
Seeking extra funding	3.97
Utilising new management techniques	3.39
Delivering off shore	3.19
Utilising new technology	3.57
Implementing VET policy	4.19
Delivering training on demand	3.80
Competing with other training providers	3.63
Restructuring	3.22

Respondents were invited to list challenges other than those stated in the questionnaire. Across the range of responses (50 altogether), the major issues highlighted by managers were:

- accountability/compliance, for example, 'complying with registered training organisation requirement/ paperwork'
- dealing with bureaucracy, for example, 'keeping up with bureaucracy and variations state to state'
- change, for example, 'change—organisational', 'culture change', 'constant changes for RTO'
- flexible learning/e-learning, for example, 'flexible learning, e business'
- funding, for example, 'growth through efficiency—core funds', 'stable cash flow'
- staffing, for example, 'staff changes'.

Government policy is implemented through a range of specific initiatives such as legislative and regulatory requirements, funding models, performance measures, and quality and auditing practices (Australian Quality Training Framework). These initiatives were frequently perceived as demands made by government on providers and as unnecessarily strict.

Commerce and competition

Managers of training providers are juggling the often-competing demands of meeting government priorities and maintaining organisational viability in an increasingly competitive operating environment. Market activity tends to define this environment. Thus, private providers are competing with TAFE institutes for market share, particularly in the area of apprenticeships and traineeships. Government training organisations no longer have a monopoly when it comes to accessing public funds. Both government training organisations and non-government training organisations need to 'be run like a commercial entity':

> It doesn't matter what the product is, from a managing director/business point of view. A college or a company these days needs to be run like a commercial entity. All the major institutions seem to be going that way. And being a privately owned company as well, we have a responsibility to shareholders which larger institutions don't if they are government funded.
>
> (Senior manager, private commercial provider, Queensland)

> What we need is a more effective tendering unit or more effective commercial unit … Just in terms of when someone rings the Institute and says: 'I want this training for my employees, can we start on Monday?' You know, in this Institute, well in TAFE anyway, you chase all around for three weeks and then run into them down the service station!! So I think that's the main issue, how can we be more responsive in the competitive training environment? I don't see the issue of government funding not increasing or not retaining its value as, as much of an issue, as remaining competitive.
>
> (Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Funding

The government tends to be the major external force in shaping VET providers. In relation to group training companies, external agencies are particularly influential: 'Industry governs us, schools govern us, government governs us'. Funding tends to be a 'hot' issue for VET managers and VET organisations today. This is certainly the case for group training companies and TAFEs where 'core funding, commercial funding' are 'the things that drive the institute':

> The funding issue is probably the biggest one for us at the moment because we are still funded on traditional face-to-face mode and we're delivering on an individual basis to … trainees.
>
> (Program manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> Part of the problem is that with the VET sector now, certainly in Victoria, the funding model through successive productivity cuts over the last 10 years … [has] driven the funding of VET down to a point where it's unsustainable. We're now having to really use non-government money to keep the institutes going.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

> TAFE has changed, in regard to all the things that are happening in the world. The things that drive the institute, such as core funding, commercial funding, are changing and you will never go back to the old days.
>
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

> Resources and funding are the biggest issues. Meeting your profile[4] for government-funded training.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> You have this vision for where your organisation is likely to be with absolutely no certainty that there will be any funding support for that.
>
> (Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

> Well, issues that group training companies are facing are more to do with funding and the levels of funding. When group training [companies] started 20 years ago, they were supported fairly well by government in regards to setting them up, having funds available for them to then grow in apprenticeship numbers because traineeships weren't about then. Probably over the last 5 years, funding has been cut back in a number of areas.
>
> (Field officer, group training company, Victoria)

[4] The term 'profile' refers to curriculum hours or student contact hours purchased from providers by state government training authorities.

Culture shift

An executive manager reported on the changes occurring in TAFE in New South Wales over the past decade in this way:

> I have been with the organisation five years and just prior to me arriving … they had undergone two major restructures from state level. They were put into regions and then they were transferred within a short period of time to networks, and then that only lasted for about 18 months, and they were formed into institutes.

With continual 'changes in the structure, there has been a big push for culture change'. The culture of TAFE is changing from 'being an old fashioned public sector, highly bureaucratic "I tell you what to do, you do it type of operation", more to a teams base'.

> One of the biggest challenges that we have is the issue of the culture being a large complex public sector organisation and people are not willing to change … The responsibility is very, very difficult in terms of looking at that culture shift that we have to implement … The difficulty with TAFE is the competitive environment that we now find ourselves in where the non-treasury funds are becoming increasingly important and it gets back to [the] culture of the organisation. (Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Market and managerialist discourses in the vocational education and training sector are seeking to redefine organisational culture such that there is less emphasis on community values and more on commercial ones. This redefinition is characteristic of both public providers and private providers, particularly private not-for-profit providers:

> Critically, the public service has a very strong history in New South Wales and pervades all that we have done. A difficult ask has been to address a business-type approach in management and that has escalated over the past few years.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

> I know I have a commitment to the business and I know I'm not soft-hearted when it comes to some of the warm and fuzzy stuff that we're involved in. I can be quite hard-nosed with my staff. When I say: 'I'm sorry, you've gone far enough in helping that person, you can't hold their hand for the rest of their life', or: 'We don't get funding to do what you're doing, I know you feel for this person, you work with them, but when they don't do what they have to do, we have to be able to step back'. (Executive manager, group training company, Victoria)

Partnerships

There was some evidence to support the view that new forms of co-operative relationships are emerging at provider level. As discussed more fully below, VET managers mediate policy agendas, such as the introduction of the competitive training marketplace by creating joint co-operative ventures and links. In striving to meet market needs, competition is not the only strategy pursued by providers. The growth of 'co-operatives', 'networks' and 'hubs' illustrates the emergence of collaboration within competition (Gleeson 2001) and the potential in the VET sector for change:

> Some TAFEs don't talk to each other, but I see TAFE as a whole rather than as a geographical delivery unit. I've done a number of co-operatives with TAFEs that are joining our area. So a leader needs to be able to think: 'If I can't do it myself, how can I do it, to meet a market need?' Sometimes you can't do it by yourself but you can do it in co-operatives.
>
> (Senior TAFE manager, Queensland)

> I have gathered [together] 3 or 4 smaller RTOs [registered training organisations]. We share the work we have to do and standardise it amongst ourselves, except change the names and so forth. That's the only way that I have seen to break this enormous [administrative] burden that we have. We have a local education and training network which is geared towards

> marketing the region as an education hub. Now, we are trying to use that network to help the smaller RTOs. (Senior manager, private provider, Queensland)

'Partnerships' are emerging as a key site of organisational activity in VET: 'The most successful outcomes in VET … have been built from the foundations of partnerships between equal stakeholders' (ANTA 2000, p.19). The growth of inter-organisational relations and inter-sectoral associations such as those between VET providers and schools, VET providers and universities, was discernible in the data. These developments suggest that we can expect to see more and more of a different kind of provider taking shape in the VET sector and consequently, a different kind of VET manager. It remains to be seen whether this provider assumes the form of a commercial provider, a community provider, or both.

Audit and accountability

New patterns of work organisation (for example, 'teams of staff that work across one or two campuses'), new patterns of training delivery (for example, workplace delivery, 'just-in-time' delivery), and increased emphasis on accountability and reporting, have resulted in additional administrative responsibilities for managers and staff. One of the most significant effects on staff was the shift of time and attention from core teaching tasks to administration: 'Often there is more admin. to do than actual teaching'.

> If we could pull some of the admin. pressure off the teaching staff that would be good. There is all this pressure on you to deliver your hours and then there is pressure to do the administration. For instance, because of AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework], we are having an assessment audit and I just don't honestly have the time.
> (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

Given increased auditing, various administrative systems have been put in place such that 'the record keeping has become paramount and we've all become paranoid':

> Each student, even if they've just had a telephone contact regarding a particular module, we get funding for that module for that student, even if they haven't attended. So the record keeping has become paramount and we've all become paranoid, because the teachers now have become more administrators, they have to keep their Accurate Records Process registers up to scratch. (Staff member, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Auditing functions as a central mechanism that can be used to shape the business performance of the organisation: 'If we don't come out of the audit [well] we'll lose funding'. In the Victorian TAFE provider above, extra administrative work does not attract extra administrative staff to do the work. The work has 'increased three/fourfold', one outcome being that: 'I don't care anymore and I'm very sceptical'.

Individual analyses

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of VET leaders and managers have changed considerably as VET providers endeavour to operate in a highly competitive, market environment.

It was widely agreed that 'there is a much more complex range of functions than managers were involved in five years ago'. Many managers commented on the 'breadth of issues' significant today.

> The job has become more complex. The old-style manager was very collegial and you made the rules as you went along. What is required [now] is breadth of understanding in things like quality assurance measures, accrual-based accounting, basic financial management. Considerable breadth of expertise is required in marketing and public relations, knowledge of

> equal employment opportunity principles, knowledge of audits and Treasury Department requirements. There has been a huge growth in the breadth of one's knowledge base in order to meet modern demands. (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

These changes would appear to impact most on those staff who are required to perform a dual role, that is, middle and frontline managers:

> Now there are fewer management structures, *not* only do the tasks have to go somewhere but the roles and responsibilities have to go somewhere as well. While I think a lot has gone up, I think a hell of a lot has been delegated down. Most of the grunt happens at the frontline manager level. If I think about my area, HR, we have pulled out the supervisor level; that means that people like myself are a supervisor and a manager rolled into one. I also have to work at both a strategic and an operational level.
> (Staff development manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> I would have to say that I think that at the frontline management level in VET, the responsibilities and challenges are quite onerous, in fact, they are excessive. I think at my level, which is senior level … [they are] less so. (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

The discourses of strategic management and strategic leadership define the roles and responsibilities of VET managers and leaders. It is commonly claimed in the business literature that strategic management requires (strategic) leadership: 'Because strategic managers are concerned more with effectiveness than efficiency, they need to be leaders in addition to managers' (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.27).

In the context of flattening organisational structures, where a lot of responsibility has been 'delegated down', the distinction between management and leadership appeared increasingly irrelevant:

> Look five to ten years ago, I would have said they would be different, because there is that difference from being a manager to [being] a leader, but these days the requirement put on managers is to have that leadership visionary role.
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> To be a good leader, you have to be able to manage as well. You have to have your finger on the pulse. (Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

> Somebody who is a good manager is also somebody who is able to take up passionately the goals and strategies that the organisation puts into place, which is what I have identified as leadership. (Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

Senior management and above

In line with the constructs and dimensions sketched in the following section senior managers were found to perform five broad leadership and management roles. Unlike frontline managers whose roles were more dispersed, senior managers' roles were relatively integrated: each affected the other and all were interrelated.

Business management

First and foremost, the senior VET manager cum leader is a business manager: someone who is 'opportunity focussed' and says: 'How can I take this and make it work for our business'. Business management also involves 'monitor[ing] processes and procedures, targets and goals, ensuring other people do what they need to do to keep the organisation performing most effectively'.

Achieving good business outcomes is the lifeblood of VET organisations: 'The outcomes of performance mean the existence of the organisation'. The greatest change that senior managers in VET have experienced over the last few years in terms of their current role concerns 'the increase in

business focus': 'There has certainly been a shift towards a business-like approach, commercial, as in fee-for-service, but certainly business' (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

Strategic leadership

Secondly, this manager is a strategic leader—able to visualise strategic objectives and communicate them within the organisation. 'Although the college sets the vision and sets the strategic objectives, you have got to be able to visualise that and communicate it to your staff. You need to see how that can be applied and inspire and lead your staff (Senior TAFE manager, Western Australia).

More broadly, s/he is a *strategist*—able to take opportunities and make them work in a way that will ensure the success of the organisation in the future. Senior management is said to be 'much more strategic' than other kinds of management.

Strategy has secured a foothold in VET providers, both public providers and private providers, including private not-for-profit providers. As part of envisaging future directions, it involves market analysis and systems analysis: 'looking at industry trends that are emerging, future-casting, research on a daily basis—newspapers, industry and community perspectives'. It also involves introducing systems and measures for monitoring outcomes: 'The strategic focus has impacted most significantly on the accountability of the Centre. We are accountable for what we deliver, how we deliver, and how long it takes to deliver'. Accordingly, 'a good manager keeps a good eye on … performance indicators' (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland).

Change leadership

In conjunction with the above, the senior VET manager has responsibility for bringing about, or better perhaps, leading organisational change: 'The old bureaucratic-type management style doesn't work when you're wanting to pull people through change. You can't drive them and push them, you have to lead them (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia). This manager must also communicate the need for change, and assist staff to accept it and 'go forward with it'. The need for change leadership was strongly expressed in TAFEs:

> TAFE has two cultures, the old culture and a new culture. There are people that are willing to accept change and go forward with it and take the positives, and a lot of the older staff are very, not to be union bashing but unionised from the old days [they] have the old culture: 'what TAFE owes me'. (Frontline manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

The ideal product of a cultural change process in TAFE was depicted as:

> [He/she] must be flexible, and must readily accept change. The market is so dynamic … Therefore, people's willingness to get out there, risk manage, take the opportunity, wear the consequences if it doesn't work but plan for it to work, and not be so concerned about maintaining an even keel. The kind of person that we want is the person who is switched on, is alert and is willing to take appropriate risks at appropriate times, and move into uncharted waters. (Business development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Change leadership has both an internal and an external focus. The latter can involve attempting to change public perceptions of the provider and promoting it in new ways:

> We are an organisation that … aims to surprise and delight. We're changing our culture to go for a reputation of excellence, innovation and dynamism. We're doing that because we feel that people have had various fixed ideas about TAFE and in fact everyone calls us 'the TAFE' or attempts to make every TAFE synonymous with every other TAFE. We're wanting to differentiate ourselves. (Executive manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

'People stuff' (human resources)

'People stuff is really what being a manager is all about'. The interpersonal dimension of leadership was widely acknowledged as critically important. VET organisations are professional organisations where 'teaching staff and others like to have access':

> Then I think there's a whole lot of communication skills that are required within the organisation so that you're visible and are seen to be visible. It's a professional organisation—our teaching staff and others like to have access and understand where their directors are coming from. (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

> You certainly have to have really good interpersonal skills, you have to be people focussed. You have to be team oriented (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Boundary spanning

Managers have responsibilities across the organisation. A particular focus of senior managers is managing outwards: 'I think you have got to have an external focus … I have found the most effective strategy in my school has been to be community based' (Senior TAFE manager, Western Australia). Networking and liaison are critical functions. Industry consultation takes up a large proportion of senior managers' time: 'I need to be out and about dealing with industry and communicating'. Political lobbying and purchaser negotiations (negotiations around purchasing agreements) are significant aspects of the executive manager's job.

Executive and senior VET managers also have an important advocacy role. They need to promote educational ideas, most particularly vocational education ideas, and articulate 'the value of public TAFEs'. This role was strongly supported in group training companies: '[Employers] won't try [us] out or follow us, if they don't believe group training is good'. Performing this role involved brokering boundaries between registered training organisations, industry and employers such that a culture of commitment to training is created that all parties share.

Managerial tasks and activities

The senior managerial role was well summarised by an executive manager as:

> Project planning, meeting deadlines, and being good on detail. A capacity to deal with the big picture stuff … to look outside as much as inside … negotiation and communication skills, being able to market and promote the organisation and to network.
> (Private commercial provider, Queensland)

Similar points emerged in relation to the tasks and activities integral to performance of their management and leadership role that respondents identified in the survey questionnaire. Senior VET managers were found to be chiefly engaged in the tasks of 'quality and planning', 'finance', 'marketing and development' and 'business development'. Of 355 respondents, 84.8% nominated 'quality and planning' as the major senior management task and 83.9% nominated 'finance'. One respondent added the comment that these tasks were not performed by each and every senior manager 'but across [the] senior group'. With respect to activities in which senior managers are engaged, of 336 respondents, the highest ratings were given to the two items 'promoting a clear vision' and 'building business, industry and community links'.

Respondents were also invited to list tasks and activities in addition to those stated in the questionnaire. Across the range of responses (63 altogether), the major areas addressed were:

- ✧ educational delivery, also described as 'program delivery', 'training delivery'
- ✧ educational leadership, also described as 'facilitating VET education'
- ✧ government requirements, also described as 'government reports', 'government compliance'

- dealing with government, also described as 'political strategy and input'; 'managing DETIR [Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations]'
- maintaining community interests, also described as 'community/cultural diversity'.

It might be noted that the more traditional roles of VET managers surfaced in these comments. Attention was given not only to educational leadership but also 'curriculum development', 'educational development' and 'learning development'.

Current and future roles

Managers surveyed were also asked two open-ended questions with respect to changes in management and leadership role, namely:

- What 3 major changes to your management and leadership roles have you experienced in the recent past?
- What will be the main changes to these roles in the next five years?

Across the range of responses (307 altogether), the major recent role changes mentioned were:

- *strategic focus*: 'providing strategic direction'; 'from operational to strategic planning'; 'external focus'; 'increasingly strategic role'; 'decision-making founded on sound information'; 'move away from operational roles'; 'improving corporate strategy'
- *technology and e-commerce*: 'e-learning'; 'utilising new technologies'; 'the impact of ICT [information communication technology]'
- *accountability and reporting*: 'increasing accountability in qualitative & quantitative reporting requirements'; 'managing [government] audit processes'; 'paperwork overload'
- *implementation of systems and standards*: 'managing a quality system'; 'increased audit requirements'; 'introducing performance appraisals'
- *financial management*: 'growing importance of non-recurrent income'; 'increased emphasis on pursuit of efficiencies'; 'more time chasing funding'; 'sourcing external funds'; 'securing commercial clients'; 'seek[ing] more commercial contracts'
- *focus on leadership*: 'leading by example'; 'much less educational leadership, much more leading change'; 'lead a diverse group of people (as opposed to manage)'; 'educational leadership to business management leadership (from programs to paperwork)'; 'much more emphasis on leading the organisation, for example, setting goals'; 'need to consistently demonstrate leadership'; 'less direct line management, more portfolio leadership'
- *human resource development*: 'shift in focus to development of human resources'; 'HR strategy'; 'micro human resource management'; 'human resource issues'.

Responses from managers based in different types of provider were not greatly different. The issues raised with respect to role change were widely shared. Various projections were made by managers (273 altogether) about their future management and leadership roles. The following list represents a small, random selection of these projections:

- doing role electronically, being more entrepreneurial (TAFE manager)
- e-commerce, greater autonomy, greater business focus (TAFE manager)
- greater emphasis on external relationships and business growth (TAFE manager)
- greater local accountability, greater community input, less emphasis on industry links (TAFE manager)
- increased focus on off-campus delivery, partnerships with others (TAFE manager)
- greater accountability for quality of delivery (very welcome) (Head of campus, TAFE)

- ✧ communications management via e-commerce & virtual campus (Manager, private provider)
- ✧ greater industry partnerships (Manager, private commercial provider)
- ✧ managing partnerships/managing change (Manager, private commercial provider)
- ✧ more administrative work, more record-keeping, more compliance (Manager, private provider)
- ✧ wider planning—strategic partnerships to allow for bigger $ base & larger scale of operation (Manager, private provider)
- ✧ continuing emphasis on commercial aspects (Manager, group training company)
- ✧ greater specialisation of function, higher level of expertise for each staff member (Manager, group training company)
- ✧ further multiskilling in areas of responsibility (Training manager, group training company)
- ✧ managing funding reduction and maintaining service standards (Manager, group training company)
- ✧ technology, increased competition, market demand (Manager, group training company)
- ✧ greater emphasis on contract management rather than people management, joint operational planning (Manager, group training company).

Comparative analyses: Managers in TAFEs, private commercial providers and group training companies

Senior management and above

A selection of findings from the key respondents to the survey is presented in this section. Drawn from TAFE institutes, private commercial providers and group training companies, these respondents were largely senior managers and above (see appendix A in volume 2 for a full list of managerial titles). Their responses are compared in an attempt to identify variations or differences between respondent sub-groups and to explore the implications of these differences for the senior managerial role. The significance of these differences was determined statistically using chi-square tests of association.

Table 19 summarises the mean ratings by key respondents of challenges with respect to management and leadership which have played a critical role in their organisations in the recent past.

'Building partnerships with business and industry' was rated more highly by managers in TAFE than managers in private commercial providers and group training companies. Managers in TAFE were significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view 'partnerships' as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. Managers in TAFE were also significantly more likely than managers in the other providers to view 'expanding access to VET for disadvantaged groups' as such a challenge.

Managers in private commercial providers were significantly less likely than managers in the other provider organisations to view 'seeking extra funding' as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. Commonly, private commercial providers deliver training to individuals on a fee-for-service basis: 'Students are our clients; they are paying customers'. This may account for the greater emphasis given to competition by managers in these providers—they compete for customers or clients, rather than public funds.

As the mean ratings indicate, 'delivering off-shore' was perceived to play a far less critical role in group training companies than in TAFEs and private commercial providers. Managers in group

training companies were significantly less likely than managers in the other provider organisations to perceive off-shore delivery as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. Unlike these providers, group training companies are not commonly involved in international education and training. Accordingly, this finding is not unexpected.

TAFE managers were significantly more likely than the other provider managers to view new technology as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. Given the emphasis in VET on flexible learning, which includes (but is not confined to) online learning, this finding is also not unexpected.

As reported earlier, of the ten given challenges, 'implementing VET policy' achieved the highest mean rating. Managers in TAFE were significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view 'policy' as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. They were also significantly more likely than managers in these providers to view 'training on demand' in this way.

As table 20 indicates, the main issues for key respondents with respect to management and leadership were 'ensuring targets are met' and 'providing strategic focus and direction'.

Managers in TAFE were significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view 'client focus' as an important issue. Client focus can be understood as part and parcel of the ethos and culture of private commercial providers. Accordingly, it might be thought that no great need exists in these providers for work along these lines.

Issues around 'leadership in teaching and learning' were perceived to be very important by managers in TAFE and managers in private commercial providers. Group training company managers were significantly less likely than TAFE managers to view these issues in this way. The core activity of group training companies is managing the employment and training of apprentices and trainees (not necessarily delivering this training). As a result, this finding is not unlikely.

'Planning for succession' was not perceived by managers in private commercial providers to be a particularly pressing issue. This perception may relate to the generally smaller size of these providers and their 'flatter' structures. Managers in these providers were significantly less likely than managers in TAFE to view succession as a critical issue.

In line with the findings on new technology reported above, TAFE managers were significantly more likely than other provider managers to view 'harnessing the power of new technology' as an issue that is pressing for the organisation.

Table 21 provides a summary of the mean ratings by key respondents of activities with respect to the performance of the senior managerial role.

Broadly in line with the findings on change leadership below, managers in TAFE institutes were significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view leading organisational change as an activity that is important to the performance of the senior managerial role.

Managers in TAFE and managers in group training companies rated the activity 'developing middle and frontline managers' more highly than managers in private commercial providers. The former managers were significantly more likely than the latter managers to view this development as an activity that is important to the performance of the senior managerial role. Given that the majority of private commercial providers surveyed were small, this finding is not unexpected. Managers at these levels may simply not exist in these providers.

'Sourcing new clients' was rated more highly by managers in group training companies and private commercial providers than managers in TAFE. Managers in TAFE were significantly less likely than managers in private commercial providers to view sourcing clients as an activity that is important to the performance of the senior managerial role.

Table 19: Challenges by key respondent (ratings)

Type of respondent	Partnerships	Access	Funding	'New' management	Delivering off-shore	Technology	Policy	Training on demand	Competition	Restructuring
TAFE/uni with TAFE	4.33	3.12	4.37	3.46	2.69	3.90	4.48	3.87	3.62	3.39
Private comm. provider	3.84	2.05	3.13	3.25	2.39	3.26	4.09	3.53	3.85	2.83
Group training company	4.31	2.52	3.96	3.36	1.31	3.00	3.98	3.70	3.70	3.07
Total	**4.17**	**2.70**	**3.94**	**3.37**	**2.43**	**3.55**	**4.26**	**3.73**	**3.71**	**3.15**

Table 20: Issues by key respondent (ratings)

Type of respondent	Client focus	Leading teaching and learning	Devolved decision-making	Meeting targets	Balancing entrepreneur-ship & education	Alliances	Succession	Strategic focus	Technology	Creating shared vision
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	4.14	4.11	3.42	4.35	3.72	3.98	3.41	4.21	4.00	4.02
Private comm provider	3.63	4.02	2.90	4.25	3.98	3.69	2.96	4.10	3.44	3.75
Group training company	3.92	3.43	3.27	4.06	3.45	4.00	3.15	4.04	3.21	3.59
Total	**3.94**	**3.95**	**3.23**	**4.26**	**3.75**	**3.89**	**3.22**	**4.14**	**3.67**	**3.85**

Table 21: Senior management activities by key respondent (ratings)

Type of respondent	Leading org. change	Promoting clear vision	Developing managers	Product development	Sourcing clients	Strategic initiative	Education leadership	Accountability	Linkages	Obtaining financial resources
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	4.26	4.33	3.78	3.70	3.85	4.07	4.23	4.01	4.26	4.20
Private comm. provider	3.83	4.37	3.23	3.97	4.47	4.01	4.26	3.95	4.03	3.74
Group training company	3.87	4.18	3.89	3.77	4.51	4.02	3.34	3.73	4.31	4.10
Total	**4.06**	**4.31**	**3.64**	**3.80**	**4.17**	**4.04**	**4.07**	**3.94**	**4.20**	**4.04**

Table 22: Senior management capabilities by key respondent (ratings)

Type of respondent	Corporate vision	Strategic focus	Achieving outcomes	Managing resources	Change leadership	Interpersonal relations	Personal development	Business/ entrepreneurial skills	Staff development
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	4.62	4.65	4.69	4.50	4.54	4.55	4.50	4.46	4.66
Private comm. provider	4.57	4.66	4.66	4.50	4.12	4.39	4.58	4.65	4.65
Group training company	4.69	4.53	4.61	4.47	4.29	4.35	4.59	4.55	4.62
Total	**4.62**	**4.63**	**4.67**	**4.49**	**4.36**	**4.46**	**4.54**	**4.54**	**4.65**

In line with issues around 'leadership in teaching and learning' above, the activity of 'providing educational leadership' was rated more highly by managers in TAFE and private commercial providers than managers in group training companies. The highly casualised character of the teaching workforce in these providers may account, at least in part, for this finding. Group training company managers were significantly less likely than the other provider managers to view this activity as important to the performance of their managerial role.

'Obtaining financial resources' was rated considerably less highly by managers in private commercial providers than managers in TAFE institutes and group training companies. In line with the finding on seeking extra funding above, the managers of the former were significantly less likely than the latter managers to view this activity as important to the performance of their managerial role.

Table 22 summarises the mean ratings by key respondents of nine capabilities which recent research suggests are required by senior managers in vocational education and training in order to perform their management and leadership roles (Callan 2001a, 2001b). All items were rated highly. Like the ratings given by respondents overall, the highest rating was given to 'achieving outcomes'. 'Staff development' and 'strategic focus' also rated highly.

The items 'change leadership' and 'interpersonal relationships' achieved significantly higher ratings from TAFE managers than other provider managers. TAFE managers were significantly more likely than other provider managers to view change leadership as a capability they require in order to perform their management roles. Managers in TAFE were also significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view interpersonal relationships as a required management capability. By comparison with other providers, there would appear to be a particular call for skills in communicating the need for change, gaining the commitment of staff to change, and negotiating desired change in TAFE institutes. This finding is consistent with findings from the interview and case data: 'Managing change is an expectation now' (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland).

Frontline management

A good deal of overlap was found between the roles of executive/senior managers and frontline managers. Like executive/senior managers, frontline managers' efforts are increasingly directed outwards. Again like these managers, frontline managers are expected to lead organisationally: 'These days, the requirement put on managers is to have that leadership visionary role'. Frontline managers' roles are both strategic and operational. The balance of time spent on these roles is somewhat different of course.

Frontline management is 'where the rubber hits the road, as far as doing business is concerned'. With the introduction of flatter management structures, managerial roles and responsibilities have accumulated at first-line (frontline) management level: 'Most of the grunt happens at the frontline manager level'. Frontline managerial roles are now so diverse—teaching, administration, operational planning, strategic planning etc.—that work 'just seems to be covering your butt each day of the week':

> You either need to have a head teacher with a non-teaching role so that the paperwork and things could be done on time, ahead of time, so that you then have time to sit and plan for the future, what we can change, what is changing, how we can do it, look at courses coming up, see how we can get staff involved, but it just seems to be covering your butt each day of the week. (Head teacher, TAFE, New South Wales)

> My role has changed significantly from the person who used to go out and visit the kids on site to see how they are going, more or less, to more managing the training of the apprentices and trainees. There is a lot more negotiation these days with RTOs [registered training organisations], development of training programs, selection of competencies, signing of a lot

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> more documentation, a lot more reporting to the State Training Board, so that has taken over from the pastoral care, mentoring, making sure the kids are okay sort of situation.
>
> (Field officer, group training company, Victoria)

Frontline managers in VET spend the bulk of their time implementing system changes such as training packages, the Australian Quality Training Framework and off-campus/workplace delivery. However, their managerial role is not exclusively implementational. They are involved in 'everything to do with staff' as well as 'building up business'. 'I think the pressures on the frontline manager are to be a bit of everything' (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

Program managers in TAFE reported that 'probably about forty, fifty per cent' of their time was dedicated to developing relationships with industry and the community. 'My role includes liaising and meeting with industry groups, trouble-shooting, planning, budget forecasting, tendering for projects, and a lot of administrative work' (Frontline manager, TAFE, Victoria).

Discourses of human resource management were evident in the data collected from frontline managers:

> Human resource management, financial management—that's what we do basically … Ultimately, the responsibilities are financial, human and physical resource management.
>
> (Program manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> It is a management role—it's a human resource management role because that's really what you are doing, you're managing people, you're going through the recruitment process with people, dealing with industrial relations issues, occupational health and safety issues and you're also looking after the pastoral care of the apprentices and you're doing appraisals and feedback on performance, and those types of things.
>
> (Field officer, group training company, Victoria)

Among other things, frontline managers in VET function as human resources managers. Part of their job is to integrate individual staff with organisational goals and strategies: 'mak[e] sure that the future directions for the individuals in the particular unit are within the whole organisation's strategic direction'.

Accordingly, they can be caught between the initiatives of upper management and the preferences of staff:

> [Frontline managers] are unfortunately sandwiched between two layers of management: there is upper management pushing down directives and policies, plans and procedures [which] they are told to activate, implement, organise the operational aspects of, then underneath them, they have a team reporting back to them about the delivery aspects of these instructions and they have to handle everything to do with that at the same time. … On the occasions I have deputised … I couldn't wait to get back to my own job because of the stress.
>
> (Principal lecturer TAFE, Western Australia)

> I wouldn't have their job for quids. [It's] not an easy job; they have to deal with us, with our everyday issues, and then they have to go to the other side—upper management. They have to take the business plan and implement it and make sure it runs smoothly. There are lots of issues and politics; it is a very stressful job. I have seen a few burn out. They have a lot of pressure on them to perform but then they are there for us too. I think there is a part of them with us and then they have their own criteria to meet. They have to be both strategic and operational.
>
> (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

> A manager has responsibilities across the institute. A lot of that day-to-day organisational work has to be done by staff in a team, not by the manager. So they [staff] would much prefer not to do any administration and have someone else do all the timetabling, the co-ordination of student placements, etc. The reality is, that is now part of staff workload, not a manager's role. 'Just let me get on and teach, my job's just teaching' is not valid any more.
>
> (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Frontline managers are placed in a line of authority:

> Every time there is a new change to the system, it comes down to the program manager to roll [it] out. (Program manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

They are 'the lieutenants and drivers of all the initiatives'. The specific roles and functions of the frontline manager in TAFE (Program manager, head teacher) were well described in the following:

> So now we are having to do mandatory staff performance appraisals three to four times a year, we have to do OH&S [occupational health and safety] inspections, and attend training, and committees, and whatever else. Fee-for-service or commercial work is now a real focus that every program area [has]. We are expected now to set targets at the beginning of the year and not only monitor and achieve those, but increase our business on a yearly basis. And there's a lot of reporting back to the Director on that. … And certainly from the profile side of things, we are much more accountable for our budgets. Now that is both budgets, that is, making sure that the profile is coming in with the student enrolments and payments. It is also making sure that we are spending according to what is coming in and that we are spending according to the budget that we were given. (Program manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Managers and staff acknowledged a plurality and diversity of roles at frontline level, uneasy allocations of priority with respect to these roles, and the shifting identities that accompany them ('lieutenant', 'driver', 'a bit of everything').

Summary of roles and functions

The roles and functions of senior and frontline managers are summarised in table 23.

It should be noted at this point that the kind of knowledge and skill that is crucial to expertise cannot be made fully transparent (through, for example, statements of knowledge and skill or competency/capability frameworks). The expertise required to perform management and leadership roles in VET providers relies on experiential and implicit knowledge which is not readily recognisable. Nevertheless, the data gave a clear indication of the knowledge and skills that managers themselves perceive they require in order to perform their current roles. It is these that we will report on here.

Business skills

VET managers at all levels were claimed to need business skills concerning planning and budgeting, resource management (for example, allocating resources to achieve outcomes), marketing and business development, and enterprise and entrepreneurship ('looking for breakthrough stuff'). Some of these skills were also perceived to be required in staff:

> As we are being pushed more and more to develop our own cash flows, we need to be better business managers. (Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

> If I look at the program managers out there, I have to say that the ones who are successful in TAFE have those business capabilities. They are good financial managers, good people managers, and they are good resource managers. It is great that they have that academic background too so that they can understand the issues and challenges that the lecturers and the students face but an increasing amount of their job is the business management side. (Staff development manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> For those who have come through the system, just been promoted from a lecturer upwards, I think the aspects of operating a business need to be approached. (Frontline manager, private provider, Queensland)

I don't like accounting but I know if I understood more about accounting and how our financial systems operated, I would be a little bit better off.

(Frontline manager, group training company, Queensland)

I need the skills to chase business, I guess you would call that sales and marketing. I have an educational background and I am not confident in the management and business side of VET. I don't feel comfortable to be able to say: 'We are running this course, please pay us your money'. If we need to do that, then we need to develop these skills.

(Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

Table 23: Roles and functions of senior and frontline managers in VET

Managers	Roles	Functions
Senior managers	Business management and development	✧ Strategic planning and budgeting
		✧ Financial management and accountability
		✧ 'Identify[ing] training opportunities'
		✧ Winning industry contracts
		✧ 'Preparing tenders, proposals'
		✧ 'Looking for breakthrough stuff'
	Strategic leadership	✧ 'Deal[ing] with the big picture stuff'
		✧ 'Look[ing] outside as much as inside'
		✧ 'Keep[ing] a good eye on those performance indicators'
	Change leadership	✧ Creating a vision for change
		✧ Creating readiness for change
	People management (HR)	✧ 'Adding value to what [staff] do'
	Boundary spanning	✧ Networking: 'You need to be in constant contact with industry'
		✧ 'Promoting the college'
Frontline managers	Financial management	✧ 'Planning, budget forecasting'
		✧ 'Tendering writing'
		✧ 'Tendering for projects'
	Administration and operational management	✧ Administration: 'signing off on requests'; 'paperwork'
		✧ 'Balanc[ing] the budget'
		✧ 'Profile management: the courses that are run, the hours generated from [them], the HR allocation to the budgets'
	Strategic management	✧ 'Taking people in the direction of the college strategic focus'
	People management (HR)	✧ 'Everything to do with staff': recruitment and selection, training, reviewing staff, appraisals
	Consulting (internal and external)	✧ 'Liaising and meeting with industry groups'
		✧ 'Getting out there and generating income'
	Educational leadership	✧ 'Resource development for training packages

Strategic skills

Strategy emerged as the overarching element in prescriptions for successful management and leadership in VET. Throughout the data, business skills appeared to underscore strategic skills such as setting corporate directions, promoting a corporate vision, providing a strategic focus, undertaking strategic planning, 'looking for breakthrough stuff' and 'be[ing] one step ahead':

> You need to have a very good strategic focus, so you've got to be a strategic thinker and you've got to have planning skills. You've got people who support you doing this but you've got to have the capacity to develop and run the organisation from a strategic perspective and then use that strategic framework to establish the contributions the various parts of the organisation are going to make to achieving that.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

> [Also, you must be] able to identify training opportunities or initiatives like taking training to a particular industry in the workplace [or] getting a flexible delivery project. It is about going beyond the current delivery performance agreement and operational plan because we also have to be … one step ahead. We are also looking for breakthrough stuff, innovative and creative ways of doing things. (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Strategy 'is more than planning, it is strategic thinking and strategic action':

> Bureaucracies are very good at strategic planning but they are not very good at strategic thinking sometimes and strategic action. That is part of the leadership skills that we really need and we are trying to develop in [this region], strategic thinking and strategic action. Industry now wants people who have leadership and project management skills.
>
> (Manager, professional development, TAFE, New South Wales)

Staff and managers at all levels are involved in strategic action, although not necessarily strategic planning:

> The things that we look to [our line manager] for are suggestions of tactics of how we are going to achieve strategies that have been put in place as an institute goal, and to help us keep our focus on those. (Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

> There is strategic planning. [It] happens at upper management level. … Very few lecturing staff would be included in strategic planning. (Principal lecturer, TAFE, Western Australia)

The 'portfolio' of skills that strategic managers require was well summarised by this TAFE manager:

> One of the key ones is you've got to keep informed. You've got to make sure that when you are trying to influence the organisation, you actually are influencing it in ways that are moving it forward. So you have to keep reading and researching and looking at what the next trends are. And getting that information out to the people who can do things with it. Sometimes you've got to change some of that and customise it for your own organisation. 'Here's the big trend; what might it mean when it gets to here? And what might it look like in three to five years time? Have you got the vision, do you know what it's going to look like when it happens? Have you got at least the general idea?' What often happens is, if you can get things started, the people you get it started with can take it a whole lot further than you can ever imagine and that's when you really have to step out of the way and make sure you are not impeding people.

People management skills

All participants in the study emphasised the importance of 'people skills' in VET: 'You can never have enough people management skills and business management skills'; 'We are working with such diverse groups of people, both employees and clients, so people skills are really critical'. A TAFE manager in South Australia expressed the view that 'people are more important now … More investment is needed in them and their management'.

Interpersonal and communication skills were perceived to drive people management: 'The other thing I think that you need to do is, you need to be good at providing feedback to people. Letting them know when they are doing the right thing'.

Communication skills were emphasised time and time again throughout the data: 'Negotiation and communication skills, being able to market and promote the organisation and to network—all that stuff':

> What we like to see is good consulting skills, so not only listening and building a picture of the client and what their needs are but also being skilled in negotiation to get the best deal out of it for the organisation as well.
>
> (Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Western Australia)

> You can't go anywhere without the people wanting to come with you. I guess it's leadership. You've got to be able to have the support of the people through their recognition of what you've achieved or what you're about.
>
> (Chief executive officer, group training company, Victoria)

Including staff in decision-making—'making the whole team feel part of the decision-making'—is a very important part of relationship building within VET organisations:

> We're re trying to make sure that it's all really inclusive and everyone has their say. We have staff meetings at the end of each term, as well as other meetings.
>
> (Frontline manager, private provider, South Australia)

> The most important quality is inclusivity, making the whole team feel part of the decision-making, including them in decisions and directions, strategic plans, etc.
>
> (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Human resource management

Currently, TAFE is caught up in concerns for productivity and accountability: 'At the moment, there is much more focus on productivity, on accountability, that has come through over the last 3 or 4 years'. Priority was given to skills associated with ensuring the sustainability of TAFEs, including attending to the currency of the skills of those working within them.

In response to the question: 'What kinds of management development, if any, would benefit frontline managers in VET?', a frontline manager in a group training company responded: 'I think human resources probably, and in general terms, how to deal with people, understanding of people, understand that people come from diverse backgrounds'.

Other responses were:

> The huge issue at the moment is the human resource management skills, that would be number one. Conflict management skills are a huge issue and they certainly need training in that area. Conflict management skills are tied in with HR skills … being able to defuse situations and handle people and communicate is one of the biggest areas.
>
> (Principal lecturer, TAFE, South Australia)

> There's probably some industrial relations issues. We really need to have a new look at the whole enterprise bargaining arrangements here, being arranged with our teaching staff—they're very much based on old models and need some new thinking. I'm not saying we want to be exploiting staff, we just want to be able to use staff in a different way than the current framework for that EBA [enterprise bargaining agreement] which is still largely 21 hours face-to-face teaching. We won't be doing that in 10 years time—we simply won't be teaching that way. So the challenge is to get that changed and get the change in attitude.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

> Compared to how things were years ago, far more of the staff are sessionals or casuals. There is not the funding around that allows you to fund infrastructure, that is having trainers on

staff. You basically have to recruit them as you need them and it is very difficult to guarantee anyone any continuity. This is a challenge in how you manage those people.

(Senior Manager, group training company, Western Australia)

Change leadership

Change leadership was widely held to be an essential part of contemporary management in VET providers:

> The big issue is change and getting people to follow. It's change management at the moment insofar as all these new staff procedures that we are bringing in. We have a casualised working staff … They are very good people but there's an inclination to run in, teach, and run out. I don't blame them for that because they are only paid so much an hour. So trying to get them engaged with the institution and trying to lift the academic standard is a big one.
>
> (Senior manager, private provider, Queensland)

> [Frontline managers require skills in] change management: making sure that the future directions for the individuals in the particular unit are within the whole organisation's strategic direction. (Program manager, TAFE, South Australia)

> Change management is constant. [We] need to be adept at that.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

> Change management is not an addition now. It's stock and trade for a VET administrator now, it really is. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

In accord with the views expressed in the section directly above, the need for change leadership arises, in part, from the contingent nature of the contemporary workforce. It might be noted here that the casualised working staff who 'run in, teach, and run out' appear to be the focus of change leadership efforts, not the new working arrangements.

Expertise in change leadership was perceived to be required by managers in order to ensure 'different ways of doing things' in the new operational environment. While change leadership emerged as a theme in all providers, it was particularly prominent in TAFE institutes:

> There is a need for people to operate at higher levels and with increased competence across a wide range of operational specific skills. The inability to effectively change some people, due to their conscious diffidence to meet the needs of the new environment [needs to be addressed]. (Senior TAFE manager, South Australia)

> As a manager, I've been change-managing staff into different ways of doing things and educating community and industry to understand that [curriculum] is no longer modular and structured, but now it is skills and competency-based. It's totally changed managing teachers and curriculum. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Queensland)

For many TAFE managers, it would appear that the greatest hindrance are the people who have been working in the system for a very long time and see no personal advantage for themselves in changing as they are due to retire or resign within the next five to ten years. These staff were seen as significant obstacles to reform.

Essential capabilities

Table 24 summarises the mean ratings by the survey respondents of nine capabilities which recent research (Callan 2001a; 2001b) suggests are essential for those who manage training organisations. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that they require these capabilities. All items were rated highly on the 5-point scale where ratings of 4 represented 'agree' and 5 represented 'strongly agree'. As one respondent declared: 'All of these capabilities are so essential'.

Of 342 respondents, the highest rating was given to the item 'achieving outcomes'. 'Corporate vision and direction' and 'strategic focus' were also rated very highly.

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Table 24: Senior management capabilities

Capabilities	Mean
Corporate vision and direction	4.64
Strategic focus	4.63
Achieving outcomes	4.68
Developing and managing resources	4.48
Change leadership	4.35
Interpersonal relationships	4.45
Personal development	4.55
Business and entrepreneurial skills	4.54
Staff development and empowerment	4.62

Other capabilities mentioned by respondents (21 altogether) as required capabilities included:

- ability to identify educational trends
- apply excellence in corporate governance
- auditing skills
- cultural awareness
- developing line succession
- a focus on quality culture
- developing teamwork
- doing whatever it takes to meet objectives
- finance skills and expertise
- financial analysis
- financial genius
- government compliance—making it simple
- improved knowledge and use of e-business
- patience when dealing with government VET sector
- project management
- remembering what education is about
- see clearly and assess the situation the company is in currently
- survival skills
- transparency in all dealings.

The capabilities required of frontline managers were reported to be the same as those for senior managers 'but to a lesser degree'. Comments such as the following were not uncommon: 'The abilities that these officers require are similar to what is required for a senior position but with a more hands-on feel'. Emphasis was placed by respondents on frontline managers developing 'a sense of the whole operation, not just their teaching area/training responsibilities'. The view expressed in the statement 'capacity to be a generalist as well as frontline manager' was widely shared.

Making managers and leaders

Similar issues concerning leadership and management development were raised by managers. In essence, the majority of managers perceived that there is a serious shortfall in VET organisations

relating to management and leadership development. As a regional manager from a group training company commented: 'I believe there needs to be a significant increase in training for practitioners in this field'. These findings match the findings of recent research (Mitchell & Young 2001). While shared by all providers, this perception was particularly pronounced in TAFEs:

> [Development] needs are being met in a very *ad hoc* way by involvement in committees, attending seminars, workshops etc. to keep up to date.
>
> (Executive manager, group training company, Western Australia)

> [There are] considerable needs. [I] would like to see all managers [to] be made aware of their skills and what they haven't got and what they should be trained up in. We should offer training but we won't train our own staff for free. A standard of qualification level should be set—in communication, financial skills etc. These should be minimum standards that are met.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Victoria)

> There is a huge professional development requirement across the board from senior managers to teaching teams and that's not being met. For business managers, it's leadership; for the teachers it's team development, teaching strategy and assessment.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

A staff member in TAFE made the useful point that managers in VET need to have skills in management and leadership before they are placed in management and leadership roles, rather than acquiring them on the job:

> I would like to see future managers have the skills before they get here, rather than acquire skills while they are here; rather than moving by default from a position within the area into management, [they should have] those skills before they get in there, so they are ready to go.
>
> (Principal lecturer, TAFE, South Australia)

Preferred processes of professional development

The trend towards customisation of training (Mitchell & Young 2001, p.41) was reflected in the data on managers' preferences for processes of professional development. In relation to strategies for management and leadership development, managers expressed clear preferences for practical, work-related learning:

> I prefer the hands-on approach. I need to be able to see it, hear it, and do it. … I need to put it in place and try and work it out for myself.
>
> (Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Western Australia)

> Action learning, experiential learning, so that you can contextualise knowledge on the job. We have professional networks set up. (Senior TAFE manager, Queensland)

> [I prefer] tailored programs using on-the-job experience that is relevant and valuable.
>
> (Executive manager, TAFE, Victoria)

> [I prefer] high-level participation in seminars and workshops as opposed to being lectured to. Action learning programs, case studies, scenarios and group work. Working with peers and others who are aspiring to the same heights, and networking with people who have already achieved that high level.
>
> (Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Western Australia)

> I prefer professional development in terms of courses, mentoring, research, action learning and exchange or work shadow with other managers.
>
> (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> Mentoring; project-based training—not where you go into a classroom and be lectured [at]; case study research and discussion.
>
> (Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

They favoured group problem-solving approaches (virtual and 'real') where networking opportunities were provided.

> I like work-shopping with group activity, group problem solving. … Expanding your network of people in similar positions who are being presented with similar problems is a great resource. (Frontline manager, group training company, Western Australia)

> Involvement in seminars and workshops to encourage networking and the ability to share ideas and talk to peers and colleagues.
>
> (Executive manager, group training company, Western Australia)

> I would prefer to meet with other managers from this and other institutes in a non-formalised, non-agenda-ed meeting and talk over coffee … Sometimes in this job you can feel that you are working in isolation. A mentor would be useful. I feel I need someone to bounce ideas off who can understand management issues from my level.
>
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, Victoria)

A staff development manager in TAFE commented on the success her institution was having with a particular strategy for management development—'one-on-one consultancy' or 'just-in-time training':

> Whilst we find that it is quite resource-intensive, it is having a much better effect than group training. Just-in-time training, on the job as needed. Those sorts of initiatives have worked well.

The preferences of the managers surveyed (301 altogether) with regard to processes of professional development are summarised in table 25.

Table 25: Processes of development

Development processes	Mean
Self-directed learning	3.30
Work-based projects	3.55
Structured personal support (e.g. mentors and coaches)	3.51
Workshops/seminars/conferences	3.50
Formal courses	3.23
Informal learning (e.g. networking with peers)	3.66
Programs tailored to need (i.e. mix of options above)	3.86

As can be seen, all items rated relatively highly on the 5-point scale where ratings of 3 represented 'interested' in the stated processes of development and ratings of 5 represented 'extremely interested'. Managers expressed a clear preference for 'programs tailored to need' and 'informal learning'. While interested in formal courses, senior managers sought 'available relief for study'. No significant differences with respect to the professional development preferences of managers in TAFE institutes, private commercial providers and group training companies were found.

Other processes of professional development mentioned by managers (11 altogether) included:

- ✧ access to flexible ways of higher learning
- ✧ chat rooms for peers
- ✧ reading and discussing trends
- ✧ short courses by various organisations.

Current development arrangements

The data provided plentiful evidence of programs currently being delivered to ensure managers' and leaders' continuing development. A professional development manager in a TAFE explained what his institution is doing in terms of management training in this way:

> Essentially, within this organisation we've started a massive cultural change program which was actually started about three or four years ago, and the idea at the time was to use a top-down approach and try to change the culture at the top which was a fair amount of a dismal failure to be quite honest. So then we took on a different approach where we thought what we need in this organisation is a critical mass of people with a new way of thinking, as in a new culture. Now we recognised that this was not going to come from a leadership of 12 or 15 people, so we developed a target group of 320 frontline managers and we put them into a five-day training program, intensive training program, which was called VET Managers of the Future.

The VET Managers of the Future program attempts to shift frontline managers out of the role of 'professional victim' into 'the problem-solving role'.

> Now that program is, what it is about is that it works on a model that is a triangle and a circle and the circle is problem-solving and the triangle is a hierarchy. [It involves] looking at the hierarchy and seeing how, when people, the longer they are in the hierarchy, they learn to be helpless, they learn to be dependent, then when they learn helplessness and dependency on the hierarchy they become professional victims and then they blame the hierarchy. So what we are trying to do with this program is break them out of that into the problem-solving role. Now the movement from one side out of the triangle into the circle is probably 8 or 10 years, and we recognise that.

The program 'deals with pushing the boundaries, being able to challenge, it gives basic business skills, things like that':

> So what we end up with is a frontline manager, who is hopefully pushing the boundary, pushing their campus manager in terms of change and innovation and empowerment, and we have pressure on those managers now from the team members doing the same thing.

Programs such as these are set within a strategic management model. Successful strategic management attempts to institutionalise ways of thinking (or mindsets) that will enable people to anticipate and implement change as appropriate:

> The 'Challenging VET Managers' program was designed for the team members of the VET managers … and the philosophy of that program was twofold: to continue the mindset shift … and to give them the skills to challenge their immediate managers.

Professional development: Senior and frontline managers

There were discernible differences in the data with respect to the professional development requirements of executive/senior managers and frontline managers. Generally, executive/senior managers expressed a preference for learning 'in a practical context'. This might involve a combination of on-the-job learning and formal courses or, simply, networking with peers. Emphasis was placed on experiential learning:

> I think an MBA would be very useful to a person in my role. I don't think I get this on the job alone. I am all for formal qualifications in a practical context and at my level I think an MBA is the next step for me and the same goes for other senior managers in VET.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> Personal professional development is important. You have to personally be of a frame of mind that you need to keep an open mind and always be prepared to learn. And I think that comes also from mixing with peer-type people rather than doing traditional courses—for want of a better term. (Chief executive officer, group training company, Queensland)

> I think the … senior manager's job is an experience job, both in time served and the variety of experiences. (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

The general manager of a group training company promoted the idea of 'cross-pollination' between education and industry: 'An educationalist could take a sabbatical in a manufacturing plant, car plant or some company … where they could look at the structure of a private enterprise company

that deals with the vagaries of world trade'. People from industry could spend some time looking at academia in an attempt to determine whether 'we can create a more meeting of the minds'.

Frontline managers, most particularly program managers in TAFE institutes, were reported to need business skills development of a relatively specific kind:

> Because they come from an academic background, the type of development they need is the add-on to the business: how you manage your budget, how you manage people, how you go out and get fee-for-service, how you communicate with industry. … They also need research and marketing skills so they are not making assumptions based on their own experience, [rather] they are based on definite need.
>
> (Professional development manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

New to their managerial roles, they were claimed to be interested in 'skills to do their job': 'What we are finding in our coaching roles, is that people want skills to deal with a particular critical incident or individual'.

The preferred processes for conducting this skill development were 'just-in-time training, on the job as needed'; in other words, one-on-one consultancy with a mentor or guide. A frontline manager in a private provider spoke of 'those obscure things' that are best learned through 'some sort of a mentor situation' in this way:

> I think in terms of professional development, it's those obscure things: you don't necessarily just develop someone into being that. Sometimes it's coupled with giving people the knowledge of how to go about it, not so much that you'll turn them into someone who is a fantastic networker all of a sudden, it's how do you go about creating those networks, how do you … deal with difficult situations but maintain a positive attitude. It's those really hard things that often you have to work with and it comes not so much through attendance at a one-day workshop. I would like to see … some sort of a mentor situation, the sort of thing where you can gain a lot one on one. And you might have several mentors. I think that's probably as useful as any set programs *per se*.
>
> "

More generally, the type and style of management and leadership development required by individuals and by VET organisations was found to be largely situational. The prior history of the manager and the particular requirements of the organisation have to be taken into account:

> I'm not sure that I would gain a lot by going through a management development program other than the personal contacts. Also, I realise the time that's involved in those sorts of programs. I think for other people it would certainly be useful. I've actually been on the other side of the fence, where I've been developing executive leadership programs for people in universities and following up with them as to how useful it was in learning to manage their staff and lead. I think for people who haven't had some sort of developmental program, it gives them, particularly if they are education focussed, it gives them that link to business thinking. (Frontline manager, private provider, Queensland)
>
> The other thing we are trying to do is deliberately set up a network to nurture the next wave of managers, project co-ordinators, leaders, which you can only do in a general sense. What we are hoping to do there is support people to undertake some postgraduate courses, particularly online. (Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Programs of leadership and management development were designed to support and deliver the strategic priorities of the provider. These priorities were different in different providers which may explain the interest in 'tailored programs' expressed in the survey questionnaire (see table 25).

Sustaining valued leadership in VET

Sustaining valued leadership in VET is not only a matter of strengthening the skills that leaders bring to their roles and tailoring programs of leadership development to meet their developmental needs, but also of supporting the leadership initiatives they are already taking place in the VET

sector. Despite widespread evidence of the growth of business management practices where one provider competes with another for an ever-decreasing pool of public funds, many VET managers supported the development of more collaborative models of management where different providers 'work[ed] together on a range of activities':

> I think there's some challenges about increased collaboration between institutes and moving from the competitive model that we were in, and forced into by governments, to now go back to something far more collaborative and work together on a range of activities and a lot more resource sharing and information sharing. If someone's doing something well at [X institute], well we need to utilise some of that stuff. That's coming back—a lot of us went through that very competitive period—whilst I quite enjoy that, I don't mind that, it does keep you on your toes and does give you energy—from a public TAFE perspective, it's not a system perspective, you're just talking about a [particular institute] perspective. So if we succeed, I think it's our whole sector that succeeds—I think that's the way the philosophy needs to go in the future.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

The comments of this senior manager suggest that a sustainable future for VET might lie more in collaborative activity than competitive activity. VET institutions can operate through collaboration in a competitive market situation and, in so doing, create conditions where 'it's our whole sector that succeeds'. Change literature points to the need for a collaborative culture as a precondition for successful change to occur (see for example, Fullan 2000; Hargreaves 1994; Hargreaves et al., 2001).[5] It is commonly argued that cultures of collaboration strengthen people's sense of common purpose and enable them to interact assertively with external pressures for change.

In a recent paper on the professional identity of teachers in Australia under conditions of significant change, Judyth Sachs comments that: 'There is now some evidence suggesting that the market is no longer the appropriate metaphor nor structure in which education policies and practices develop' (2001, p.159). Our evidence suggests that many managers have reservations about the appropriateness of a market structure in vocational education and training: 'There are a lot of RTOs [registered training organisations] out there … If we are going to be competing, we should be competing against them, not ourselves' (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia). A senior TAFE manager in Western Australia stated that 'there has been a shift [in Western Australia] towards co-operation rather than direct competition':

> The whole sector is currently in a state of flux. The new government has ordered a review of TAFE colleges and this could/will mean a more collaborative approach to education and training, using a shared services model. There may also be amalgamations of TAFE colleges.

Managers in various states are considering, and initiating co-operative arrangements as a basis for producing alternative approaches to the provision of VET. These managers supported a sectoral or systemic approach, rather than competitive, individual, institutional provision:

> Sharing resources across the sector is an important one. You can share ideas and all that sort of thing. When it comes down to sharing intellectual property, sharing resources, some people get a little bit 'Oh, you know, that's what gives us our cutting edge' is often what they say. In other words, that gives them their competitive edge.
>
> (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> VET leadership in the past has … been very much focussed around pitch [one institution against another] institution [make them] scared of each other, competitive with each other.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

> I've really come to the belief that sharing is the only way to progress … and that's possibly why we are looking at so many partnership arrangements. … So it is almost like that model is coming in now.
>
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

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5 According to Hargreaves (1994, p.245), 'the principle of collaboration has repeatedly emerged as a productive response to a world in which problems are unpredictable, solutions are unclear, and demands and expectations are intensifying'.

> Some TAFEs don't talk to each other, but I see TAFE as a whole rather than as a geographical delivery unit. I've done a number of co-operatives with TAFEs that are joining our area. So a leader needs to be able to think, 'If I can't do it myself, how can I do it, to meet a market need?' Sometimes you can't do it by yourself but you can do it in co-operatives.
>
> (Senior TAFE manager, Queensland)

> I have gathered 3 or 4 smaller RTOs [registered training organisations] [together]. We share the work we have to do and standardise it amongst ourselves, except change the names and so forth. That's the only way that I have seen to break this enormous [administrative] burden that we have. We have a local education and training network which is geared towards marketing the region as an education hub. Now, we are trying to use that network to help the smaller RTOs. (Senior manager, private provider, Queensland)

Collaboration within competition: Networked relationships

The emerging interest in 'a more collaborative approach to education and training' may have as much to do with strategy and pragmatism—'building up business'—as with the development of a new form of governance in the VET sector.[6] Networked relationships are a contemporary trend (Marginson 2000, p.25). Among other things, they provide organisations with ways to expand locally and globally:

> The stuff that I think is more beneficial in building up business for my unit is out there, talking to people and networking. I mean tomorrow we are off to … and all over the country … We will end up with probably fifteen traineeships out of that trip.
>
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> Our vision is partnership with industries and communities. It is the external constraints that don't always allow us to be in partnership with industry and the community itself. It is that conflict between what needs to happen and what does happen, what needs to happen to get by on a day-to-day basis and what needs to happen on a more strategic level.
>
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

A staff member commented that he personally had 'had to deal with building alliances and partnerships across the VET and the university sector'. A network-based approach to organisation may be emerging in VET (Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education 2002). These developments suggest that we can expect to see VET personnel reconstituting their power at the centre of alliances formed within and outside their organisations. A more distributed model of leadership may be emerging where VET managers and staff and other managers and staff work conjointly on shared tasks and problems:

> Within our organisation we have leaders at a variety of levels. I don't believe the only leader is the Chief Executive Officer. (Senior manager, group training company, Victoria)

> Well you get leaders right across the college, you get leaders in students, staff who take on particular roles. (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

An executive manager of a TAFE institute spoke of the involvement of her executive management team in 'getting out … to communities', in this way: 'We have a one-day meeting and the other day we spend out in industry. … Over the twelve months we will have probably visited about 60 industries'.

Gleeson (2001), commenting on the impact of reforms in the further education sector in the United Kingdom, argues for the emergence of a culture of 'collaboration within competition' at college level. The principals and senior managers involved in his study mediated changing education policy agendas by creating joint co-operative ventures and links. 'The danger is one of

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[6] According to Marginson and Considine (2000, p.7), governance embraces 'leadership', 'management' and 'strategy'. 'Governance is concerned with the determination of value inside [institutions], their systems of decision-making and resource allocation, their mission and purposes, the patterns of authority and hierarchy, and the relationship of … institutions to the different … worlds within and the worlds of government, business and community without'.

treating principals and senior managers as victims of funding led or managerialist reform, rather than strategic interpreters of policy in the reconstruction of FE practices at college level' (Gleeson 2001, p.194). As discussed earlier, there was some evidence to suggest that a similar cultural change is taking place in Australia.

Good leadership encourages linkages

Leadership in the VET sector is matter of looking outwards to the industries that VET organisations serve. It is also a matter of learning from other educational sectors:

> Good leadership clearly encourages linkages between the organisation and the area or the region and therefore the industry that it serves. That is very important.
>
> (Staff member, TAFE, New South Wales)

> I think one of the things we have to be a bit careful of in the VET sector is not getting a silo mentality. Not thinking that the only things that are relevant to us are the things that happen in VET. We have to be prepared to look at the university sector, look at what's happened there, and look at the schools sector, take those kind of things on board as well. I think we actually need to make sure that we are getting some depth to what we understand, so encouraging people to do management training, or go off and do a postgraduate degree [is important].
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

The need to link and look outwards would appear to be a new imperative in VET: 'The VET sector, of all the three sectors, tends to be a little more inward-looking'. A number of managers maintained that the VET sector should assert itself more, should get 'recognised for what it is', should show 'how important the technician and para-professional level is in supporting the nation':

> We have to do a lot more in marketing vocational education [and] training, within the government. We have not got the profile that schools or universities have got. … Yet there has been research done showing how important the technician and para-professional level is in supporting the nation. We are not getting that message across.
>
> (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

> I certainly think that in vocational education and training there is no room for the traditionalist tunnel vision-type person. I think those days are long past. I think what we need now is people with vision. We need people who have passion and I think there has to be a belief in what we are trying to achieve.
>
> (Chief executive officer, group training company, Queensland)

> Amongst politicians, there's a fairly good understanding of schools and a very good understanding of university, but a poor understanding of TAFE. … So part of the leadership issue is … having a much broader perception about the whole VET sector … and making sure that we're raising the awareness of that in politicians' eyes and redressing the role of public TAFE.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Sustaining valued leadership and management in vocational education and training is also a matter of 'do[ing] a massive amount of work to create … perceptions that VET/TAFE teaching is a worthwhile profession to attract people into it. I just think that's one of the major issues facing us' (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria).

Organisational analyses

The contemporary VET organisation: Constructs and identities

Six key constructs of organisation were found as part of the analyses of the data collected on organisational practices of management and leadership.[7] In eliciting these constructs, particular attention was given to answers provided to questions in the survey questionnaire concerning *challenges* that VET providers have faced in the recent past and *issues* in relation to management and leadership when dealing with these challenges. The data were not reducible to a stable label such as 'VET organisation'. Rather, our analyses uncovered dynamic and ambivalent aspects of organising in response to shifting contexts. While typical of all organisations sampled for the study, some aspects were more pronounced in some organisations than others. For example, some VET providers were more business-oriented than others.

The constructs shown in table 26 have implications for the roles and identities of leaders and managers in VET (for example, business leader, strategic manager, organisational learning leader). While it is useful for many purposes to distinguish these constructs, their integration in practice should not be overlooked. One construct can 'leak' or 'bleed' into another. Different constructs can co-exist, for example: 'We need to be more accountable because the bottom line is we have to make money or at least break even'. The link between the accountable organisation and the business organisation was especially well established in providers which rely on government funding.

Table 26: Constructs of organisation in the exercise of leadership and management

Organisational constructs	Description
The business organisation	An organisation that delivers a certain level of activity against certain targets: 'The bottom line is we have to make money'.
The strategy-focussed organisation	An organisation concerned to manage the interface between the external environment and internal areas and characteristics: 'We have identified key priorities'.
The accountable organisation	An organisation that delivers accountabilities: 'As one audit finishes another one starts'.
The lean organisation	An organisation with no surplus staff, 'flat' management structures and highly casualised: 'Staff are working longer hours. It's getting harder to keep morale going'.
The learning organisation	An organisation dedicated to the ongoing improvement of its existing operations: 'We are trying to ... set up a network to nurture the next wave of managers'.
The network organisation	An organisation that forms robust relationships with business, industry and the community: 'Our vision is partnership with industries and communities'.

The business organisation

Increasingly, VET providers are assuming the form of business organisations, with VET managers constituted as business managers responsible for delivering a certain level of activity against certain targets. The principal emphasis in the data overall with respect to the character of the new VET organisation was business:

> I am also preparing tenders, proposals etc. I really work at developing a significant number of paying projects or initiatives ... [Also, you must] be able to identify training opportunities or initiatives like taking training to a particular industry in the workplace [or] getting a flexible

[7] Other constructs were apparent in this data (e.g. professional organisation), however, meanings concerning them were not made frequently. Consequently, these constructs did not constitute key constructs.

> delivery project. It is about going beyond the current delivery performance agreement and operational plan because we also have to be … one step ahead. (TAFE)
>
> Fee-for-service or commercial work is now a real focus that every program area [has]. We are expected now to set targets at the beginning of the year and not only monitor and achieve those, but increase our business on a yearly basis. (TAFE)
>
> We are more expensive than some people but we don't believe they are getting the same outcome. That's how we sell our business. (Private commercial provider)
>
> Students are our clients; they are paying customers. (Private commercial provider)
>
> We are moving into a more business development approach. (Group training company)
>
> The organisation is constantly seeking further business. (Group training company)

Findings from the survey questionnaire (342 respondents altogether) demonstrated the dominance of two constructs of organisation—'business organisation' and 'strategic organisation'. Thus, given a list of capabilities that managers at senior level are said to require in order to perform their managerial roles (Callan 2001a, 2001b), the highest ratings were given to the items 'achieving outcomes', 'corporate vision and direction' and 'strategic focus'.

To date, little empirical research exists on the extent to which VET providers in Australia are operating within a business model and the implications for vocational education of this operation. The notion that education can be considered a business or industry in the same way as any other economic entity is, of course, contestable. As Hawke notes: 'There is a growing body of experience that suggests that traditional business approaches are not always appropriate to educational provision. The primacy of rigid annual budget arrangements, for example, has largely negated longer-term planning of the sort that a developmental function such as education requires' (Hawke 2000, p.11). It remains to determine whether strategic business approaches are any more appropriate to educational provision than traditional business approaches. Certainly, balancing business performance with educational function would appear to be an ongoing issue in many VET organisations:

> When I first came here, there was a lot more ready dollars available for helping young people who weren't job-ready, so that we could run programs to get those people up to speed—people who were homeless, people who had no qualifications, people who were depressed, for whatever reason [people who were] long-term unemployed. We were running a lot of programs way back then and a lot of them were focussed on self-esteem, confidence-building, setting goals, all of those sorts of things, and they were fantastic. I actually really felt that we could make a difference to people's lives. Now, I think it is unfortunately a bit of a numbers game, that we don't have those dollars available, and so employers are always looking for the best candidate and they don't want 'problem children'.
>
> (Staff member, group training company, Victoria)

The strategy-focussed organisation

Strategy emerged as the overarching element in prescriptions for successful management and leadership in VET. 'Strategy generally concerns issues that stretch beyond the annual budget period' (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.6). As noted earlier, references to terms such as 'strategic priorities', 'strategic goals', 'strategic objectives', 'strategic planning', 'strategic action', 'strategic focus', and 'self-managing work teams' were spread widely throughout the data: 'So we have those strategic priorities at the institute level and that is now built into every team. So each team in their annual planning has to identify what they are going to do about … ' (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia).

With respect to a question in the survey questionnaire about the pressing nature of various issues concerning management and leadership in VET organisations, the highest ratings were given to the items: 'providing strategic focus and direction' and 'ensuring targets are met'. The significance of strategy in VET organisations was supported fully by the telephone interview and case data. Thus, a

senior manager of a TAFE provider spoke of the necessity of TAFEs having 'the capacity to develop and run the organisation from a strategic perspective'. Similarly, a senior manager in a group training company reported a need for 'generic management skills with particular emphasis on the planning and visionary stuff. Basically, all the things identified by Karpin'.

A significant constraint with respect to strategic leadership and management is that 'money is allocated on a twelve-month basis'. How does an organisation assemble resources to achieve its future goals in circumstances such as these?

> We are still trying to get some funding for apprentices that we trained in 2000 and we won't get final funding for our apprentices and trainees who have trained this year. If we are lucky, we will get it by about April next year. (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Strategy-focussed organisations seek to make strategy everyone's daily job: 'In our performance management with our program manager we have to come up with a business idea for fee-for-service. It is a big ask when you have everything else to do' (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia). Managers are required to give close attention to detail: 'You've got measures of what you're trying to achieve and you are referring to those and monitoring those and changing what the organisation has to do so that you can achieve those activities'.

The accountable organisation

The accountable VET organisation is an organisation caught up in 'compliance and increasing levels of bureaucracy in VET'. The systems of audit and quality assurance that accompany contemporary business and administrative practice tend to define the accountable organisation: 'There is now greater accountability, a demand for performance management of the business. Government expects greater outcomes. Targets are clearly drivers of action' (Senior TAFE manager, South Australia).

Private providers, including private not-for -profit providers, were the most constrained by what one manager called '[looking] in the rear view mirror':

> Initially my role was teaching half the day and administration half the day. I was lucky to find jobs in administration. Now with all the different changes that all vocational education and training organisations have had, we have huge amounts of admin. … There has been a swing from class facilitator to far more of the management of overseeing the Department of Training's paperwork for trainees. (Senior manager, private commercial provider)

> You spend so much time naval gazing, looking backwards [looking] in the rear view mirror in lieu of looking forward. All accountability, all reporting aspects, are based on historical performance, not on what you are going to do in the future.
>
> (Executive manager, group training company)

> As one audit finishes another one starts. (Frontline manager, group training company)

> We have become more administrat[ion] focussed rather than working on business opportunities and addressing challenges. (Executive manager, group training company)

As small business operators, these providers do not have staff to deal readily with ongoing changes to VET policy as well as other government policy which is perceived to have created an administrative burden. 'The accountability factor is particularly onerous in businesses that are small' (Senior manager, private commercial provider).

The situation of these providers is well illustrated in the two comments which follow:

> At one stage, I could devote a full week to my students and management of my company. Nowadays, I would devote 50% of it having to deal with idiots. They introduce good things, but the way they do it!! Like, the AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework] has now changed which requires a substantial change by VET providers in the way we do things. [We

are] having to introduce paperwork trails that are unbelievable. Student files used to be an inch and a half thick. Now they are up to six inches thick

(Frontline manager, private provider, Queensland).

We have just … been through two government audits simultaneously—five auditors were here! One works for the user choice contract, one is for the RTO and quality assurance. So to do what we do, we have to be a quality-assured place and that means we have got to fulfill all of those systems reviews. And at the same time, because we are ever-changing, what happens is, unless we have got the processes properly documented, things can fall through the cracks, if you like. So we are constantly looking at trying to introduce appropriate systems which enable us to do what we have to do.

(Chief executive officer, group training company, Queensland).

The demand for accountability in VET organisations has meant that managers 'have a more hands-on role than what would be preferable'. Concepts and practices of accountability can be in tension with concepts and practices of strategy. As a senior manager from a group training company commented: 'From an organisational point of view', complying with legislation and regulation 'has inhibited us from moving forward'.

The learning organisation

Without exploring in detail the concepts and practices associated with the idea of the learning organisation (see for example, Field 2000, pp.162–6), it is worth noting the trend to sponsorship of organisational learning by VET managers. Various learning processes were promoted in VET providers, including informal learning, formal training and human resource development (for example, processes of career self-direction such as individual professional development plans). 'There's a lot of opportunities for professional development but for a manager it's a question of time' (Frontline manager, TAFE).

It was very evident that an increasing premium is being placed on staff training and professional development which is aligned to the strategy and directions of the organisation:

[A good VET manager is] taking people in the direction of the college strategic focus.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

We have been trying to … have managers and staff recognise that their primary loyalty and responsibility is to the institute. That may mean that sometimes what they want to do as a team doesn't fit the direction. (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

From the data, organisational learning and development appeared to be oriented to productivity and performance, the creation of the high-performance workplace. In practising teamwork, job rotation and 'synergy between personal missions and work challenges and organisational achievement' (Business Council of Australia 2000, p.1), TAFE institutes would seem to be good examples of such workplaces:

To create a culture of teamwork, we have tried to have PD that is, where possible, administration support staff mixed with managers [and] educational staff. Of course, we have targeted programs when it is appropriate.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

We create expressions of interest on an annual basis for staff to apply to do another person's job. We have a joint executive which identifies the twenty-five management-type jobs and we develop a suitability list, people are interviewed to help with the matching, and then when someone takes leave, there is job rotation available.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

We have a couple of other champions who are leading the way in online learning, so where they show an interest and a passion, then we try to clear the way for them to do it. That is shared, so we have academic forums where we have a particular theme and staff who are doing some interesting work on that theme, it might be online learning, we will have an

academic forum and staff from across 4 or 5 teams who deal with working online will give a presentation and that is open to all staff. (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

VET managers at large are supporting their staff 'and adding value to what they do':

> I am also looking at developing staff. There is core business going on and you are supporting your staff and adding value to what they do. (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> I hold training sessions for my staff in time management and team building.
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, Queensland)

> [I am involved in] developing others in my role so that they can fill in for me if they need to.
> (Frontline manager, group training company, Western Australia)

> If mentoring programs are put in place effectively, this is one of the best developmental activities you can do. It is probably also the most cost-effective. The only way you can pass on [the] history and development of the organisation is through mentoring, not training courses.
> (Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

TAFE institutes in particular are restructuring their workforce in order to maximise the use of staff skills through, for example, the implementation of self-managed work teams: 'The organisation has moved away from the command control [approach] to more of a self-managed business type approach'. Self-managed work teams are required to manage within overall corporate requirements, however: 'I think there has been a realisation within the institute that tends to be totally self-managing is a myth and has led to isolation'.

The lean organisation

Organisational structures are changing throughout VET organisations. In line with structural change in organisations worldwide, there has been a decrease in the number of middle management positions. Management and leadership are increasingly being seen as the responsibility of a wider range of staff. In the words of a senior TAFE manager: 'Structure is becoming flatter and flatter. [We've experienced a] change from operational to true leadership'.

The notion of 'true leadership' is contestable from the point of view of staff who are 'working longer hours' and 'going through hell':

> Organisationally, people are working harder and stress levels are rising.
> (Frontline manager, group training company, New South Wales)

> The staff are overworked and I can't give them time off. And because of lack of funding, we can't pay overtime. (Middle manager, TAFE, Queensland).

> People are working very hard. Staff turnover is very high—33%.
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

> It's very hard for the lecturers at the moment. They are going through hell at the moment actually. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> Staff are working longer hours. It's getting harder to keep morale going. People are fine for a while but can't keep that up. They lose enthusiasm. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

> They don't seem to have enough teachers and they quite often use teachers from one section, or who are skilled at teaching one job [and] just bung them onto another course because they don't have somebody available. (Staff member, TAFE, New South Wales)

> Most sections run on a high level of part-time staff. [Teachers] just go around with a crate, you know, with all their stuff in it or a basket or a box and that is their mobile office.
> (Staff member, TAFE, New South Wales)

> We all still teach our full load and then we have to go and do our site visits. I have a colleague who is in the bush five days per week travelling between 2000 to 3000 km a week
> (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

Leading and managing at senior level within a lean organisation comes with its own complications: 'Lots of things need to be done but with a flatter structure you find that a lot of your time, when you'd really like to be working on the high-level more strategic stuff, you keep getting pulled back into that operational "sign here" type stuff' (Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales).

The network organisation

Plentiful evidence was provided of the importance of inter-organisational arrangements in VET. Thus, of the various 'challenges that training organisations have had to face in the recent past', as listed in the survey questionnaire, 'building partnerships with business and industry' was rated very highly. Managers and staff commented frequently on their increased involvement in relationships and partnerships with industry and other organisations: 'We have a lot more relationships with other training providers in alliances and collaboration than we used to' (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia).

The contemporary trend to networked relationships (Marginson 2000, p.25) was quite evident in the data overall. Providers are now moving in a common direction to achieve solutions to complex problems that they would be unable to achieve alone. Networks and alliances between industry and VET providers are becoming increasingly important to the way in which business is conducted. Networked relationships were of a formal and informal kind. It appeared from the data that private providers especially emphasise the importance of industry contacts towards 'keep[ing] ahead of change'. Every effort is made in these providers to develop these contacts and maintain them.

The quotes that follow illustrate the different dynamics of partnership formation in public and private providers in VET. The commentators in each case are frontline managers.

> You have got to have the sort of attitude of wanting to work with industry. All of the rest of management and leadership is all required, but I guess I would say that the key things are really these days—and even with commercial work—you really need to have that mindset and the attitude that you are happy to go out and you are happy to put proposals to people and look at what their needs are. … A good VET leader from now into the future is going to be those people that are wanting to work with industry. (Public VET provider TAFE)

> I think you've got to keep ahead of change, of what's happening in the industry. Tourism and hospitality change on a daily or weekly basis. You need to be out and about, have your contacts out there. You need to change as change happens. I'm fortunate that I'm on all the fax streams of the airlines and I know a lot of middle management people there, so as soon as something happens, they'll tell me right away. If something happens tonight, I can change my delivery method tomorrow. (Private commercial provider)

> In terms of developing partnerships in training, especially with industry these days, you need to really listen and you need to understand that it is their business and what you are trying to do is to support them in their business. That is a difficult concept because in the back of your head you are thinking this does not quite fit into the mould, structure or systems. You need to keep pulling it back and encouraging them to look at it differently to come to some place in the middle. (Private not-for-profit provider, group training company)

Organisational leadership: Dimensions

In the section which follows, we explore different dimensions of leadership and management that could be clearly identified from the data. In keeping with the work of Caldwell (2001), these dimensions might be thought to form part of a blueprint for leadership and management for sustainable improvement in the VET sector. We take it that organisational leadership and management are multi-dimensional concepts and practices. Different dimensions shift in and out of view, depending on system changes and the priorities of the organisation. As already discussed, leadership and management were closely related in the data. The relationship between the two was generally one of interplay.

Strategic leadership

Strategic leadership emerged as the main concern of the managers participating in this study. Strategy largely concerns what an organisation does. Caldwell, writing in the context of school leadership, defines strategic leadership as: 'seeing "the big picture", discerning the "megatrends", understanding the implications, ensuring that others can do the same, establishing structures and processes to bring vision to realisation, and monitoring the outcomes' (Caldwell 2001, p.10). This view corresponds with the 'VET view':

> I think of the role of leadership as being a role which provides a broad picture view, where a good leader will have a good understanding of the global direction. They will be the people who will help to formulate the strategies for the institute as a whole and how we are going to manage our business as we move into the future. I think these are the types of people who need to be visionary, who need to have the courage to take on new goals, to have the strength of personality to be able to enthuse other people. In that sense, I would also be looking to a leader to have a commitment to engage with people the whole way through the levels of the institute, so they are not distant but engage with people to help bring those things in to line.
>
> (Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

Strategic leadership is set within corporate and business discourses. The strong trend towards a market orientation in VET means that corporate strategy—'What is our business?'—and business strategy—in simple terms, being first or quickest or best—take priority in VET providers. 'There has been a noticeable shift actually from the education leader to the business leader'. In essence, leadership in VET providers is a matter of managers staying focussed on strategy so that they're 'not just driving operational stuff':

> You've got to have the capacity to develop and run the organisation from a strategic perspective and then use that strategic framework to establish the contributions the various parts of the organisation are going to make to achieving that … You've then got to be able to work with the team of senior executives you've got to bring them on board. They're part of that process, but you've got to keep working with that group and keep them focussed on strategy so that you're not just driving operational stuff, you're staying focussed on your key directions. So there's leadership in the sense of your team and developing the skills of that team so they can do that work. (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Cultural leadership

Both government training organisations and non-government training organisations are caught up in a 'business culture':

> It is a business culture these days. You have to survive, with all the non-government training organisations or the other RTOs, they have access to ANTA funds the same as TAFE does. It's not a closed shop any more so it's 'get better or get out'.
>
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

> The biggest problem that we have from a financial point of view always is cash flow. We are solely relying on numbers through the door, so if we are struggling for that, we will struggle financially. We have to focus heavily on collecting fees otherwise we are out of business because we have no other income. (Executive director, private provider, South Australia)

Issues surrounding cultural change and the leadership of this change were 'hot issues' in public VET providers and group training companies of the community-based kind. Managers often have to balance parallel and contradictory processes in order to effect cultural change:

> In a public service environment where we have public accountability, we need that ability to create a culture of risk management and risk assessment when you are trying to operate in a business model but with the constraints of the public service.
>
> (Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

> When you get teachers who say: 'I'm here to teach, I'm not a salesman, I'm not this or that, these budget concerns are not mine', guess again! They are. … From a leadership and management position, that's a major cultural issue. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

Responsive leadership

Responsive leadership in VET involves understanding the requirements of clients and acting appropriately in response to them. VET leaders are required to respond to the expectations of various stakeholders including governments, industry and the community. Behaving responsively was thought to involve various qualities:

> To be more responsive to industry, you definitely need to have a strong base in training and education, as well as very sound links with the broader community and industry and the various stakeholders. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> A good VET manager knows how the students, job seekers, companies, apprentices and trainees feel about the services you are providing.
> (Frontline manager, group training company, Western Australia)

> To me, the big issue is how do we engage the students and how do we keep them engaged.
> (Senior manager, private provider, Queensland)

Many managers in TAFEs reported that they were 'doing a lot with partnerships with industry at the moment'. A 'whole change in the delivery culture' was claimed to have taken place in some teams, with 'probably 80–85%' of training being delivered in the workplace.

Educational leadership

The commercialisation of VET providers was well summed up by one manager who reported a shift in role from 'educational leadership to business management leadership—from programs to paperwork'. As the national survey established, issues around 'leadership in teaching and learning' were very important to managers (most particularly, managers in TAFEs and private commercial providers). The focus of these issues however, was different in different providers. In private commercial providers, educational leadership was perceived to be central to a client-oriented approach. In TAFEs, 'increasing tension between educational leadership and "business" functions' was reported.

The data demonstrated that educational issues are competing for attention with business issues in providers that rely, to a large extent, on government funding:

> Because of the funding and the fact that we are having more pressure placed on us to develop our own business, therefore create a lot of our own income with fee-for-service and that sort of thing, there ends up being a lot more tension between how you are going to make money and how well you are going to deliver. (Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

> A good deal of the VET manager's time these days is chasing the next dollar. So rather than spending time on delivery, delivery almost becomes a small part of the process. You have almost had your win when you get your funding and the delivery always becomes secondary, which is a fairly sad reflection on the sector. What you end up with is the most successful training providers are the ones who invest in very good tender writing skills, rather than invest[ing] in very good training and delivery skills.
> (Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

Commitment to the concept and practice of education was evident in all providers:

> A good VET manager still has to be someone who has an educational agenda, but who is also in tune with the realities of being a good manager. It is a combination of educational leadership and management competencies. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

> As a director and program manager, you have to have an academic background. I don't think generic management is enough to assist in the academic delivery aspect of the job.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> A good manager knows all the stuff of normal business processes. [However], it is important to keep a link with teaching. The system breeds the notion that this isn't important. You have to live within the system but it is hard to. I still consider you can fight the good fight.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Victoria)

> I think ultimately there is a need for greater educational leadership. Certainly in my role here, having the ability to understand how lecturers see it, helps [enable you] to move them through a process of change. If that's not there and you just become an administrator or someone who has no idea, it's very easy to set that 'them and us' situation up.
>
> (Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Queensland)

> We have to sell the company as a business, a provider of labour, but I think the true sense of it, it's still an education provider. (Staff member, group training company, Queensland)

What appeared in question was who exactly should shoulder responsibility for this leadership and how it could be resourced.

The tendency in private commercial providers is for senior managers to take a strong interest in this leadership, for a range of reasons, including the fact that staff are employed more for their industry expertise than their educational experience:

> Being the only trained teacher, much of my role is teaching people how to teach, classroom management etc. … If a student has a difficulty, then a lot of my management role is dealing with that. (Senior manager, private provider, Western Australia)

Apparently, the tendency in TAFEs is to assign this responsibility to academic staff:

> We rely on our principal lecturers and advanced skills lecturers to provide leadership to the lecturers now. Our program managers have a more managerial, accountability, business [focus and role]. (Professional development manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

> One thing that has changed [here], and it has to change even more, is the idea that leadership does not rest with the manager. Because we are so dispersed and because we are relying on a casualised workforce more and more, leadership can be from the part-time teacher.
>
> (Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Concerns were expressed in public VET providers that there had been a 'movement from delivery management concerns to financial management':

> [Current changes to management and leadership roles have] meant less emphasis on students and student welfare and more emphasis on financial outcomes. There is less emphasis on the quality of the outcome and more emphasis on attracting students in the beginning. So the resources are being put into the front end rather than being distributed over the whole learning process. (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

> The system has lost sight of the education focus. You must come in on budget, not [worry about] how good the education is for the students.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

> Across the state, there are sixteen institutes and only three or four that have managed to cross the line in the last few years in terms of finances. And a number have huge quality problems, for example, teachers who aren't qualified. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

> [The] AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework] is a big issue. We have neglected the educational qualifications of our staff for too long and it is catching up with us.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

By contrast with the above, other TAFEs are now achieving a good balance of 'business and education, dollars and quality'. While being 'very business orientated', they have not lost sight of

'the education side': 'We have a leadership that is extremely focussed on the bottom line and they are now, in the last year, coming back to focussing on quality of delivery as well' (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland).

Issues in common

One of the striking features of the issues facing organisations in the VET sector in Australia is that these are issues in common. There are important similarities between practices of management and leadership in public VET providers and private VET providers. These similarities flow particularly from various policy initiatives (fiscal, regulatory and audit) that have been taken in VET. It appears not to matter a great deal whether the organisation is a public VET provider or a private VET provider: common issues are apparent. 'Marketisation is working its way through the public sector, and the funding mechanisms and accountability requirements of contemporary government reach across both public and private institutions' (Marginson & Considine 2000, p.245). Furthermore, private sector businesses are forming alliances and developing ways of collaborative working which are perhaps more familiar to the public sector.

It would be wrong to argue that there are not significant differences between, for instance, a small TAFE institute in regional Australia and its large, metropolitan 'counterpart', or, a small private commercial provider and a small, not-for-profit group training company. There are however, overarching similarities. While TAFE managers are more caught up in changing the culture of their organisations than other VET managers, all managers face similar challenges and require similar skills.

Private commercial providers

Private providers would appear to have a distinct advantage over public providers inasmuch as all members of staff work actively toward making industry contacts and improving industry links. As an executive manager of a private provider in South Australia reported, the provider and the employer enter into a relationship of mutual obligation where the former delivers skilled people and the latter employs these people. A strategic alliance—a symbiotic relationship—develops between these two:

> Over a number of years we have built up rapport with a lot of employers, so much so that we assist with placement of students. They know the skills a person coming from here will have, and they approach us directly, rather than advertise … In the areas of multi-media and fashion, we have gone out and made contact with various organisations … Some of the instructors who have had some industry contact have introduced us [executive managers] to them. I am happy for people here to feel that could part of their responsibility. We all have to make that good impression.

Leading these partnerships is a matter of sharing responsibility for industry linkages with the staff or taking their lead. The purpose and point of these partnerships is transparent to all involved: '[Education's] got to be based on what the industry workplace wants. I believe industry needs to be involved in all education, not just the VET sector … We try and make sure we keep those industry contacts up'.

From the data it appeared that private providers were very client-focussed and concerned to deliver effectively. Profitability was a key objective, but it was also the means to a more fundamental mission: to maximise the growth potential of the provider and secure its long-term future: 'We want to be one of the main competitors of TAFE'. Private training organisations 'don't sacrifice quality': 'There is a balance in trying to provide a quality service and at the same time remaining competitive' (Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Western Australia). The executive manager of the private provider above stated that he told staff that he would prefer to make less profit if it meant that education was well delivered:

> [Managers] need to believe that the profitability of the organisation is a secondary consideration and the education has to come first. But they need to keep both in mind and there is a fine line between them. I have always told staff that I would prefer to make less profit if it meant that the education was delivered. But I can't have the education delivered in the best possible way and then make a loss. I have to deliver it the best we possibly can, being mindful of financial and resource restraints.

Government-funded organisations

Changes to management and leadership roles have occurred for all three types of VET manager sampled. Managers in TAFE institutes and group training companies however, appeared to be presented with particular challenges. Some typical responses from managers in these organisations with respect to their roles and the complex character of these roles were:

> Increased responsibilities, pressure, diversity and complexity. Constant changes: nothing is the standard process any more. (Senior TAFE manager, Queensland)

> There's a lot more pressure. Change is ever constant. There's an increasing desire to improve customer service standards, meet targets, time and financial. A pressure for innovation—finding new and better ways of doing things. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Queensland)

> Managing information as well as people. [The role has] become complex in dealing with government and employers so it's a whole process of managing information and legislation. [I am] no longer managing a group of people. Whole systems need to be managed … quality assurance, benchmarking. Ten years ago these systems were in but not to a large degree. (Senior manager, group training company, Queensland)

> There has been an increase in complexity of the different things you have to manage. As an RTO you need to meet the various quality requirements for that. Because we are actually delivering on [a] number of contracts in different areas, like group training and job network, each of those contracts have their own quality requirements. The biggest challenge for managers is trying to balance the requirements of the various contracts that they are being offered … It is not just about delivering the training, it is about how you report on the delivery of training. (Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

It would appear from the data that commercial training providers don't actively seek government assistance. They choose to deliver training to private individuals on a fee-for-service basis, and, in so doing, avoid the costs that attach to accounting for how government money is spent.

> We don't do traineeships and we don't do anything that is government-assisted. We don't have the man- or woman-power to do a lot of the things that go to tender, we don't have those extra staff members to do that. It is impossible when we want to make our focus our students. (Frontline manager, private commercial provider, South Australia)

> User choice: it's not cost-effective for us to take those sort of people [apprentices, trainees] on … We have tried to make something that we believe will be better for the community, for us too I suppose, but also for the community and future skills base that they have available. (Senior manager, private commercial provider, South Australia)

Managing and leading VET providers in different states

There was some evidence to suggest that changes have been more marked in some states than in others. As the executive manager of a large Victorian TAFE explained:

> I have been involved with three TAFE institutions in two states. Things vary in the different states. The Victorian institutions have more independence and therefore a wider range of responsibilities. There has been a change in productivity and a change in the organisational culture … There has been a cutback in staffing. [We] needed to be effective and respond positively while the TAFE system was being run down and amalgamations were taking place.

> Having to raise more revenue. Amalgamation posed a very significant challenge—a leadership challenge. There is also in Victoria a requirement to work out enterprise agreements with staff—enterprise bargaining.

Of the five states sampled, there were significant similarities in the issues raised. Across all states, 'greater levels of accountability' was a common theme in organisations that run on government money. In Queensland, as a senior TAFE manager commented, if audit requirements are not in place, 'we lose our registration and there are also financial penalties'.

It was clear that government institutions which have been functioning as autonomous institutions for some time have adapted to the new operating environment and are now reviewing its benefits. In some states, notably, Victoria and Queensland, some of these institutions appear to be moving beyond what one senior manager called 'that very competitive period' where one institution was pitched against another and encouraged to compete directly. In other states, notably New South Wales, where public service values are still very strong, the business model of management looked less well embedded at the level of the organisation. Accordingly, in the view of one senior manager, 'NSW TAFE is regimented and unionised, reserved and conservative. There is no risk taking which is to the detriment of the organisation'.

Conclusions

Introduction

Leading a VET institution is not an easy task, especially when managers feel they have to envision and plan for the future in an increasingly uncertain environment: 'It is very difficult to try and plan ahead when we live in such uncertain times'. Public providers, in particular, are trying to get to grips with the demands of institutional autonomy; market pressures; new management practices, most particularly private sector competitive practices; reduced funding; contestable funding; an increase in student numbers; changing patterns of demand for courses; and increased expectations from industry and individual employers (for example, the trend to 'employment-based training'). Work practices in VET providers have changed significantly. The following characteristics of the contemporary workplace are well evidenced in these providers:

> [W]ork is organised around fluid teams rather than static departments; organisational decisions are made in cross-functional meetings as well as within management ranks; all employees are responsible for quality control; flexibility is central to all operations, processes and employee understandings of their work; employees are appraised and evaluated as job descriptions have given way to performance management agreements; and finally … there is increased communication … as employees are informed and inform.
>
> (McIntyre & Solomon 1999, pp.7–8)

Changes are occurring at a number of levels, simultaneously. Changing work practices, including changes to the composition of the workforce (casualisation) are proving a significant challenge in VET providers, most particularly at frontline management level. Changing organisational practices, including changes to the character of VET organisations (for example, the shift to the business organisation, the growth of the network organisation) are also proving a significant challenge, particularly for executive and senior managers.

Findings

This section serves to summarise the findings from the study at large. Initially, three broad 'forces' that influence the practice of leadership and management in VET providers are identified. Short summaries of findings in relation to the four original research questions are then made.

Findings from the study at large

Strategic focus: Public sector reform

A particular view of management and leadership has achieved prominence in vocational education and training providers. The overarching element in prescriptions for successful management and leadership in these providers is found to be strategy.

A clear trend to increased adoption of strategic management processes is discernible in VET providers. 'We didn't have that strategic focus that we needed to work out where our growth was

going to come from. It was quite apparent to myself and others that our growth was going to be through our off-campus area which we've now developed to the point where it is now just exploding' (Executive manager, private provider, Queensland). In combination with competition in the training marketplace, the flattening of organisational structure appears to advance this trend.

Strategy concepts can be seen as an attempt to move providers from traditional management models (strictly functional, operational or task-based approaches) to one which is more businesslike and corporate in orientation and direction. They can also be seen as an attempt to build key private sector practices into the operation of the public sector. As Viljoen and Dann (2000, p.33) explain, the origins of strategic management lie in the private sector. This management provides a framework within which the aims of the public sector reform process (for example, improved efficiency and effectiveness, improved responsiveness, improved accountability) can be achieved. Like most organisations, VET providers now face the challenge of securing their long-term future in a climate of ongoing economic and social change. The incorporation of strategic processes is perceived to be an important means of coping with environmental change and, thereby, improving long-term performance.

The key changes to management and leadership in VET providers include:

- ✧ a strategic focus and approach
- ✧ an external focus
- ✧ a client focus
- ✧ an increased emphasis on change leadership
- ✧ an increased emphasis on accountability and reporting
- ✧ the devolution of administrative/management responsibilities to staff and teams
- ✧ the strengthening of management functions, including target-setting processes, performance indicators, and appraisal.

Given the corporatisation of public sector organisations,[8] public VET providers and managers in these providers are under particular pressure to adapt and change. The kind of organisation that adapts well is the strategy-focussed organisation. Accordingly, the kind of manager required in this new type of organisation is the strategic manager: a person who keeps one eye on operational matters and the other on the 'big picture': 'I always say to my own staff, I will get involved in detail enough to understand it, but then, from a management point of view, I have to look forward ten years … My value to the institute … is f r 10 to 15 years out, all the time looking forward' (Frontline manager, TAFE, New South Wales).

The discourse of strategy has a specific relation to corporate business (see Knights & Morgan 1991, for genealogical analysis of corporate strategy). The discourse of corporate strategy is characterised by the 'planned relationship between the market and the internal characteristics of the organisation' (Knights & Morgan 1991, p.257). In the data collected, the terms 'external environment' and 'market' tended to be used interchangeably, indicating the power and influence of the market approach in VET.

Environmental change: The primacy of policy

The external context of VET providers has changed dramatically over the past decade: 'There has been an increased focus on the external environment as opposed to the internal environment in terms of products and services offered for sustainable future business' (Senior manager, TAFE,

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8 Corporatisation occurs when 'public sector production is reconstituted in the form of a private commercial company under the control of the … relevant public authority. … [T]he enterprise remains within the public sector and within the reach of government policies' (Margnison 1993, p.199).

Western Australia). Strategic management and leadership has been adopted as an adaptive response to managing increasingly complex businesses in an increasingly uncertain external environment.

Changes to management and leadership roles have occurred for all three types of VET manager involved in the study. Furthermore, the nature of these role changes is broadly similar. The similarities flow largely from the policy initiatives (fiscal, regulatory and audit) that have been taken in the VET sector. While many of these initiatives are welcome, they appear to act as constraints:

> One of the tensions … have as a Director is the accountability and at the same time being faced with either government-mandated or department-mandated decisions so that we have liabilities within our budget and we don't have any control over that.
>
> (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

> They introduce good things, but the way they do it!! Like, the AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework] has now changed which requires a substantial change by VET providers in the way we do things. (Frontline manager, private provider, Queensland)

> Our vision is partnership with industries and communities. It is the external constraints that don't always allow us to be in partnership with industry and the community itself.
>
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

External drivers for change arising from policy interventions and initiatives have a considerable influence on management and leadership in VET providers. This is not to say that VET managers cannot influence government policy. They are in fact passionate policy actors: 'Being able to be in a situation where you can influence the Department of Training as to the way they go, is really important'.

There are at least seven powerful external forces that providers must contend with today:

- *the changing work environment:* 'People are working harder and stress levels are rising.'
- *the changing policy environment:* 'One person [is] employed full time now working … [on] Commonwealth Government compliance issues, tax issues, paperwork issues, forms.'
- *increased administrative responsibilities:* 'We've got checklists for just about everything that exists.'
- *reduced government funding:* 'You have this vision for where your organisation is likely to be with absolutely no certainty that there will be any funding support for that.'
- *increased expectations regarding corporate connections/industry links:* 'You have got to have the sort of attitude of wanting to work with industry.'
- *increasing use of technology and e-commerce:* 'Reusable learning objects is one of the newer kinds of directions in online learning.'
- *increasing expectation with respect to links with other sectors, agencies and organisations* e.g. universities, schools, adult community education providers: 'We have a lot more relationships with other training providers in alliances.'

Marketisation and beyond

One of the striking features of the issues facing organisations in the VET sector in Australia is that these are issues in common. There are important similarities between practices of management and leadership in public VET providers and private VET providers. As Marginson and Considine note: 'Marketisation is working its way through the public sector, and the funding mechanisms and accountability requirements of contemporary government reach across both public and private institutions' (2000, p.245).

While VET providers have not moved beyond a 'market' phase—for example, they continue to be concerned with efficient use of resources, closer management and measurement of outputs and performance, greater autonomy to compete for clients and greater accountability to government

and other stakeholders— many VET managers support the development of more collaborative models of management where different providers 'work together on a range of activities'.

Managers have reservations about the appropriateness of a market structure in vocational education and training: 'There are a lot of RTOs out there. … If we are going to be competing, we should be competing against them, not ourselves' (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia). Managers in various states are considering, and initiating, co-operative arrangements as a basis for producing an alternative approach to the provision of vocational education and training. These managers support a sectoral or systemic approach, rather than competitive, individual, institutional provision: 'I think there's some challenges about increased collaboration between institutes and moving from the competitive model that we were in, and forced into by governments, to now go back to something far more collaborative'. These developments suggest that we can expect to see more and more of a different kind of provider taking shape in the VET sector, one that is reconstituting its power at the centre of alliances formed both within and outside the organisation.

Findings with respect to the research questions

In this section we present findings with respect to the original research questions. A short summary is made of each of the following:

- the changing nature of the roles and functions of managers and leaders in VET providers
- the expertise required to perform these roles
- management and leadership development
- sustaining valued management and leadership in VET.

Heightened responsibilities, expanded roles

The role of the VET manager has changed considerably over the past few years. There is a much more complex range of functions requiring greater breadth of expertise. The breadth of issues experienced by managers and staff is in line with the changing demands of the contemporary workplace and the pressure to implement external initiatives and improvements. The role of the VET manager is extremely complex and increasingly broad. It depends on balancing the demands of external pressures, internal priorities and individual and cultural values and commitments.

Senior managers are found to perform five broad leadership and management roles:

- business management and development
- strategic leadership
- change leadership
- people-centred management
- boundary management.

Unlike frontline managers whose roles are more dispersed, senior managers' roles are relatively integrated. Senior managers also experience more autonomy in their roles than do frontline managers.

Senior managerial roles: Dual focus

Senior managerial roles are both externally and internally focussed. More time is given to the external focus which is seen as more strategic. Among other things, it involves being 'out on the road a lot talking to stakeholders'. The internal focus includes leading middle/frontline managers and assisting staff 'in implementing the college's strategic directions'. The executive and senior VET manager 'rarely sits at [a] desk for more than a day and a half a week'. 'I am paid to look outside as much as inside'.

Frontline managerial roles: Dual focus, dual roles

Frontline managers not only have a dual focus; they also perform a dual role: one part strategic and the other part operational. They manage on the edges (Mintzberg 1997), on the interface between strategy and staff, core work and commercial work, business activity and educational activity. 'People like myself are a supervisor and a manager rolled into one. I also have to work at both a strategic and an operational level'. The impact of change has been felt more fully at frontline management level than executive or senior level: 'We place a huge strain on our frontline managers. They really do all the work for core business'.

Frontline managers perform six broad leadership and management roles: financial management, administration and operational management, strategic management, people-centred management, consulting (internal and external) and educational leadership. Ultimately, their responsibilities are financial, human and physical resource management (Program manager, TAFE). Their educational leadership role is particularly well established in some providers (private commercial providers) and some states (New South Wales). In other providers (TAFEs) and other states (for example, Western Australia) this role appears to be passing to the academic staff.

Business management skills, people management skills

The expertise required to support the practices of management and leadership in VET providers is similar for senior and frontline managers and managers in public and private sector providers. The expertise required for a first-line management position is 'similar to what is required for a senior position but with a more hands-on feel'. Frontline managers in publicly funded VET providers are increasingly required to perform managerial rather than educational/professional roles: 'My role has changed significantly from the person who used to go out and visit the kids on site to see how they are going, more or less, to more managing the training of the apprentices and trainees' (Field officer, group training company, Victoria). Accordingly, the peak expertise they need to resource their changed role is business expertise.

VET managers at all levels, are found to need business skills concerning planning and budgeting, resource management (for example, allocating resources to achieve outcomes), marketing and business development, and enterprise and entrepreneurship ('looking for breakthrough stuff'): 'Managers in RTOs have a large business responsibility. This has increased over the last few years. It's a huge thing in the sector … Business management skills, people management skills make for a good VET manager' (Senior manager, private commercial provider, Victoria).

Frontline managers require expertise in 'the add-on to the business: how you manage your budget, how you manage people, how you go out and get fee-for-service, how you communicate with industry. … They also need research and marketing skills' (Professional development manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

In total VET leaders and managers require expertise in seven domains of activity:

- *business management*: resource management; project management; contract management (for example, user choice); information systems management and maintenance (for example, implementing systems and standards) planning and budgeting; tendering; monitoring processes and procedures, targets and goals; utilising new technology and conducting e-business
- *business development*: identifying business opportunities; looking for 'breakthrough stuff'; sales and marketing; promoting the organisation
- *strategic leadership*: discerning trends; future-casting; setting corporate directions; providing a strategic focus; promoting a shared vision; undertaking strategic planning; engaging in strategic thinking and taking strategic action
- *change leadership*: creating a vision for change; creating readiness for change; building work cultures that support change

- *people-centred management/ human resource development*: interpersonal relations; communicating information; consulting with staff; consulting with 'clients'; including staff in decision-making; creating a learning environment for staff that encourages innovation; providing opportunities for development of individuals and teams; mentoring and coaching; conducting performance appraisals including providing feedback on performance and assisting with career planning; acknowledging efforts of staff; staff recruitment and selection; negotiating outcomes with a team; defusing difficult situations; dealing with industrial relations issues; supporting the work of teams
- *education management:* co-ordinating and scheduling teaching teams; co-ordinating courses and staff meetings; monitoring learner management plans[9]
- *boundary spanning*: forming productive alliances; consulting, liaising and meeting with industry and community groups; public relations; articulating the value of vocational education.

Work-related learning

There is a serious shortfall in VET organisations in the area of management and leadership development. Work-based learning or work-related learning, of a formal and informal kind, is the preferred means of development. Work-related learning approaches enable organisations to implement tailored solutions to specific business problems and conditions.

Four broad approaches to leadership and management development are endorsed by VET managers:

- *work-related learning of a formal kind:* mentoring, coaching, work shadowing, deputising, project based learning, action learning, experiential learning and one-on-one consultancy
- *work-related learning of an informal kind:* non-agenda-ed meetings, support groups, 'chat rooms for peers', self-directed reading and 'be[ing] somewhere in another organisation [to] gain a perspective on how other leaders operate'
- *seminars and workshops:* participants drawn from different sectors to 'cross-pollinate', share ideas and talk, network and problem-solve, using case studies, simulations and scenarios as support
- *traditional courses and short courses:* from various organisations which provide 'formal qualifications in a practical context', for example, Master of Business Administration.

Teamwork is a particularly important feature of managerial work at all management levels. For example, senior managerial tasks are not performed by each and every senior manager 'but across [the] senior group'. Management development needs to take teamwork into account. Developmental processes might well involve work-based projects, for example, action learning groups, but should not be exclusively 'in-house'.

Senior managers in TAFE expressed the view that it is important to 'network outside the system'. 'We don't network in the VET sector because there is quite a bit of competition between private providers and TAFE. We don't network much in TAFE because there are a lot of non-successful TAFEs out there. [It's] better to network with successful organisations' (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland). Strong management, it seems, grows out of cross-sectoral activity where information from 'the broader world and the business community' can be gathered and used to support innovation and creativity in VET. Other recent research (Tyrrel 2001) supports these findings.

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9 In public VET providers, staff are increasingly required to perform an education management role, for example, timetabling, co-ordination of student placements. Managers at all levels in private commercial providers are expected to demonstrate expertise in education management (and educational leadership).

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Staff training and professional development

Efforts are being made in VET providers to provide for a new generation of managers: 'The other thing we are trying to do is deliberately set up a network to nurture the next wave of managers, project co-ordinators, leaders' (Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia). An increasing premium is being placed on staff training and professional development, most particularly development which is aligned to the strategy and directions of the organisation: '[A good VET manager is] taking people in the direction of the college strategic focus' (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

Not surprisingly perhaps, a strategic approach to management development is popular in VET providers:

> [There are some people] who we might choose not to develop because we find that we have to be more strategic and sometimes you can't teach an old horse new tricks. So we are better off using our resources and helping that section by actually developing the leadership and skills in another person within that section, rather than focussing all the leadership and management training onto the manager.
>
> (Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

> You have to look at your business … and work out what you are going to reskill and redevelop and what you are going to buy in. The decision to maintain a high casual workforce is part of buying in those skills to service those particular customers, and that is what we can do.
>
> (Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

It is widely acknowledged that succession planning is a pressing issue for leaders and managers in TAFE (Tyrrel 2001; Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training 2000). 'The emergence of "new recruit" sessional teachers who see their role as business consultants, with a portfolio of jobs across several Institutes and in industry' is central to this issue (Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training 2000, p.72). Given the 'high casual workforce' and the high level of staff turnover (reported to be running at 33% in one TAFE college), there is no guarantee that the existing pool of people in management positions will be replaced.

A senior TAFE manager expressed the view that we need to 'do a massive amount of work to create … perceptions that VET/TAFE teaching is a worthwhile profession to attract people into'. In the view of a senior manager in a private commercial provider, this work entails revaluing the profession of VET teaching by upgrading the entry requirement which, currently, is at certificate level: '[The practitioners] haven't had much teaching experience. They've done a cert. 4 in workplace assessment training which is a crock of shit. Anyone can do it. Fred Nerk can do it and he's never stood up in front of a class in his life and he gets the tick that he's done it. That's all you have to have in the VET sector'.

VET managers are of the view that managers require experience in education and training in order to successfully take up managerial positions in the VET sector: 'As a director and program manager, you have to have an academic background. I don't think generic management is enough to assist in the academic delivery aspect of the job' (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia). While managers can be 'bought in' from outside VET, this creates tension: 'We have a director of the area who is my manager, who has come in from outside VET in Australia, working in government in Australia, and he has a lot of good ideas and he is purely commercial-focussed. But whilst there are many good values in that, it causes tension' (Staff member, TAFE, New South Wales).

Maintaining valued management and leadership in VET appears problematic at frontline management level. Where is the next generation of first-line managers to come from should ongoing staff choose not to take up management positions and the 'high casual workforce' choose not to enter the teaching profession? Existing frontline managers are under enormous pressure: 'On the occasions I have deputised (as a frontline manager), and I have done this six times in the last five years, after about one month, I couldn't wait to get back to my own job because of the stress' (Principal lecturer TAFE, Western Australia). As witnesses to this pressure, some staff, at

least, are disinclined to undertake a management job: 'They do a hell of a lot of work; it is not my thing … I wouldn't do their job, ever' (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia).

Implications: Tensions and dilemmas

Given the heightened responsibilities attaching to managerial roles and the shortfall in VET with respect to management development, there is a clear need for greater leadership and management support. In planning for the future, attention also needs to be given to creating pathways for prospective managers and leaders, most particularly at frontline management level. Processes of change leadership and change management—the preferred processes for effecting organisational change in VET providers—may not secure the support of staff to develop their potential for management and leadership or their commitment to staying in VET.

Writing in the context of school education reform, Fullan (2000) claims that education institutions would be well advised to focus on reculturing: the process of developing professional learning communities within these institutions. The existence of collaborative work cultures (or professional learning communities) makes a difference to individual learning and student performance. Change literature points to the need for a collaborative culture as a precondition for successful change to occur (Fullan 2000; Hargreaves 1994). It is commonly argued that cultures of collaboration strengthen people's sense of common purpose and enable them to interact assertively with external pressures for change.

More broadly, the 'strategic turn' in the management of VET organisations might be thought a welcome departure from a time when VET managers functioned more as managers than leaders. 'In the past, TAFE has been well managed but poorly led. The system is complex and is managed well as far as managing resources and assets' (Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales). The strong emphasis on strategic leadership in the data would suggest that a new model of manager is emerging, a manager who both aspires to and is required to lead: 'These days the requirement put on managers is to have that leadership visionary role'.

In this section, we discuss some implications of this development and draw out key tensions and dilemmas surrounding it. Following Day et al. (2000, p.134), the tensions tend to be those over which VET providers and their managers have little choice or influence. In the case of dilemmas, possibilities for choice and influence exist, although making a choice can mean: 'Damned if you do and damned if you don't'.

Three broad tensions are identified: (business) strategy and education; national policy and local reality; and entrepreneurship and accountability. The fourth area discussed, managerialism and professionalism, is more a dilemma than a tension: the focus here is internal to the organisation. Arguably, clearer choices can be made with respect to what is 'inside' rather than what is 'outside' the organisation.

Strategy is the key, but is education the lock?

The new emphasis on strategic leadership can mean that other forms of leadership, notably educational leadership, are given less attention. As reported in the survey questionnaire, there is now 'much less educational leadership [and] much more leading change'. Again, there has been a shift from 'educational leadership to business management leadership'. Accordingly, there is now 'much more emphasis on leading the organisation, for example, setting goals'.

There is considerable evidence to show that concern for business performance is competing with concern for student performance. Practices of education leadership are competing with practices of business management. These developments are very evident in public VET providers:

> Say 3 years ago we had the time to focus on assessment and delivery, what our core business is all about. There wasn't the focus on fee-for-service or commercial work. So it is those

> things that have really changed is the last 2 years that I have been involved (as a frontline manager). My perception is that's where the pressure's beginning to increase.
>
> (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

> The system needs to change to put the focus back onto the learner.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

> From our main educational leaders' point of view … they don't feel that they have enough time to devote to the educational leadership role that they are given and have to put too much into the operational budget stuff, so they are having to do the stuff that is urgent and not necessarily get into the important stuff, and with the much flatter structure more pressure is put on for that to happen. (Campus manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

> Because of the funding and the fact that we are having more pressure placed on us to develop our own business, therefore create a lot of our own income with fee-for-service and that sort of thing, there ends up being a lot more tension between how you are going to make money and how well you are going to deliver. (Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

In the view of a TAFE manager from South Australia, 'commercialisation of VET has fundamentally changed the balance between education and business'. A better balance between these practices seems to be achieved in private commercial providers. Educational functions, which are at the same time business functions, are central to the success of these organisations. Thus, a private commercial provider in South Australia competes on the basis of superior service: '[Parents] know that if their child is having trouble, then we can assist them one-on-one' and quality product: '[The staff] believe in the courses and the quality of the courses'.

The tension between an educational outlook and business outlook is more fluid than fixed, however. Some TAFEs are now achieving a good balance of 'business and education, dollars and quality'. While being 'very business orientated', they have not lost sight of 'the education side': 'We have a leadership that is extremely focussed on the bottom line and they are now, in the last year, coming back to focussing on quality of delivery as well' (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland).

National policy and local reality

Providers that rely on government funding can be caught up in a tension between national policy and local reality: 'You are encouraged to act in direct opposition to the system. The policy is to be flexible but the reality is to be inflexible. The policy is to offer quality but the reality is we can't afford quality' (Senior manager, TAFE, Victoria). National policy initiatives can contradict and cut across the needs of local industries and communities. In public VET providers, the requirements of various stakeholders must be met. The management and leadership of TAFE institutions involves a complex trade-off of obligations to government, clients and the community:

> I think there are some conflicting policies. For example, there is a strong focus on user choice, which is a national imperative, which conflicts with our prime student group. 80% of our students aren't in user choice, they are not apprentices and trainees. So how do you manage that tension between a national policy and a reality of a student body and an industry you are having to serve. So there is that constant tension.
>
> (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

> Our biggest frustration is not being able to service the clients who we would like to service in that there has been no budget grace in the last three years in VET delivery and TAFE. We have had to turn away a massive amount of students in this last 12 months. Particularly in X area, the government has told us that we need to do more commercial programs and make revenue. But in X city, the majority of our students pay with a health care card. The wages aren't high and we find that we can't make revenue and can't service the students who need the training to get out of the poverty trap. We've had to turn away 150 applicants for a Certificate 3 in Aged Care. The industry is crying out for workers and we've got no funding to run anything. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Queensland)

> Business is very complex because of all the different funding sources and the different needs of various client groups. Also, being a public organisation creates conflict between [a] business culture and [the] political culture. Our business decision would be to close X college because we're not making enough money. But politically we're not allowed to do that.
>
> (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

Entrepreneurship and accountability

A further and related tension exists between the perceived need to be entrepreneurial and the requirement to be accountable. An executive manager of a private provider in Western Australia spoke to this tension in this way: 'This organisation has a cultural issue in that they need to be entrepreneurial, however, they have systems in place, QETO (quality endorsed training organisation) processes, models and frameworks, that can inhibit them … This is a conflict in cultures for this organisation which needs to be client focussed'. Other managers expressed similar opinions:

> Since 1997, there have been no changes in funding. So we have been doing more with less. And there's a major focus on private sector competitive management practices with public sector accountability. (Senior manager, TAFE)

> We have become more administration focussed rather than working on business opportunities and addressing challenges. (Executive manager, group training company)

The requirement to be accountable, which is generally welcomed by managers, contributes to 'short-termism'. Entrepreneurship and strategic action call for longer lead times than are now available in the current climate:

> There are reduced opportunities for long-term development. There is now more emphasis on short-term development—to develop opportunities to return advantages more quickly rather than over a longer period … Personally it has increased the amount of time spent on 'hands-on' management. (Senior manager, private commercial provider, Victoria)

> Less time and attention is given to big picture issues because compliance and quality issues now predominate. There are performance agreements [that] we need to meet'.
>
> (Senior manager, private commercial provider, Victoria)

Gleeson (2001, p.193), commenting on the United Kingdom experience, argues that in the immediate context of their work, senior managers often have to balance parallel and contradictory processes. These managers are required to work within ever-declining funding levels while, at the same time, respond to national demand for widening patterns of participation and learning provision.

Managerialism and professionalism

In recent years, the academic literature on public sector educational institutions in various countries has reported on the powerful tendency towards managerialism as a result of changes in the policy environment (Holloway 1999; Leggett 1997; Power, Halpin & Whitty 1997; Simkins 2000). Managers are encouraged to adopt private sector competitive management practices. This emphasis differs from traditional client-centred, public service values, based on the needs of clients as interpreted and formulated by professionals (Deem 1998). Professionalism is 'characterised by … cross-cutting attachments to client-centred, professional and public service values, such as equity and care'; 'managerialism is characterised by commitment to the over-riding values and mission of the specific organisation' (Simkins 2000, p.321).

The tension between managerialism and professionalism is sharpest in TAFEs and group training companies of a community-based kind.

> I feel very comfortable with curriculum development because of my teaching background. It's just the business side of things—I don't feel confident at all. It's not what I want to do; it's

not why I did teaching. I would have done a business degree if I wanted to do that sort of stuff. (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia).

When I first came here, there was a lot more ready dollars available for helping young people who weren't job-ready, so that we could run programs to get those people up to speed—people who were homeless, people who had no qualifications, people who were depressed, for whatever reason [people who were] long-term unemployed. We were running a lot of programs way back then and a lot of them were focussed on self-esteem, confidence-building, setting goals, all of those sorts of things, and they were fantastic. I actually really felt that we could make a difference to people's lives. Now, I think it is unfortunately a bit of a numbers game, that we don't have those dollars available, and so employers are always looking for the best candidate and they don't want 'problem children'.

(Staff member, group training company, Victoria)

The tension between these two plays out particularly in work cultures. Teachers tend to build cultures of collegial support. The creation of large multi-site organisations through restructures and amalgamations means that managers are less accessible and corporate strategy and direction has to substitute for this support. Restructuring in the TAFE sector has meant that the director has moved from the role of senior colleague to one of institutional or business manager:

The job has become more complex. The old-style manager was very collegial and you made the rules as you went along. What is required [now] is breadth of understanding in things like quality assurance measures, accrual-based accounting, basic financial management.

(Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Our managers now have to be on [various] campuses and that means we can't get to see them and so they're managing in absentia and that just seems to me to be hopeless too. It makes it really difficult if you need a decision on the spot; it can't happen.

(Staff member, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Teaching professionals have aspirations for participating in collegial decision-making, not decision-making where they are consulted on decisions made after the event and elsewhere:

Up until about 3 years ago, we always achieved our targets because, as a group, we arrived at how we were going to do it, what was possible, who could do what, looking at how many people leave, how many graduate, and how many we would need to put on to grow. As a group, if we came up with ways and means of doing that, then we always achieved our objective. The last three years we have been told by management and by the Board that our target will be 'this'. (Staff member, group training company, Victoria)

The tension between what might be called corporate culture and collegial culture is playing out strongly in large public VET providers. For many TAFE managers, the greatest hindrance are the people who have been working in the system for a very long time and who see no personal advantage for themselves in changing as they are due to retire or resign within the next five to ten years. These people are seen as significant obstacles to reform:

One of the biggest challenges that we have is the issue of the culture being a large complex public sector organisation and people are not willing to change. In terms of that, there is a lot of dead wood that needs to be sort of floated off into the distance somewhere.

(Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

There is a need for people to operate at higher levels and with increased competence across a wide range of operational specific skills. The inability to effectively change some people, due to their conscious diffidence to meet the needs of the new environment [needs to be addressed]. (Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Managers and leaders are caught up in the complex issue of whether it is best to try to change staff perception with respect to the 'needs of the new environment' or attempt to give these 'needs' new shape and definition. To what degree can managers influence 'outside' the organisation? Where do managerial loyalties lie? What and/or whom do managers manage and lead?

End note: Strategy and beyond

A critical issue for VET leaders in the future concerns the creation of organisations which are sustainable. The goal is the fulfilment of a range of social, economic and cultural purposes: 'Our biggest frustration is not being able to service the clients we would like to service'. Sustainability involves broadening rather than narrowing the scope of activities that VET providers, most particularly public VET providers, engage in. It goes beyond securing the strategic performance of the organisation to embrace the role that VET providers can play, and arguably, should play, in rendering service to stakeholders as part of the broader community.

The emerging interest in a more collaborative approach to education and training suggests a concern for sustainable development in the VET sector. This concern is, at the same time, a concern for strategic development: 'The core business is delivery, training and education. ... If we don't get the training and delivery in education right, we don't have any services to offer, we don't have any customers, we don't have a business'. The notion of sustainability may prove a good guiding idea for governance in the VET sector. Strong leadership in VET requires acknowledging a sense of a 'high tension zone'—the complexity of the relationships involved in simultaneous membership of different cultures (business, managerial, occupational, professional). Sustainability lies in the support of members of all of these cultures. In the final analysis, it is the passion expressed in the following comment that we need to preserve in VET:

> I love my job. I love what I do. I mean I teach fire fighters, I teach people how to handle snakes and reptiles. I think VET skills hand on real life stuff.

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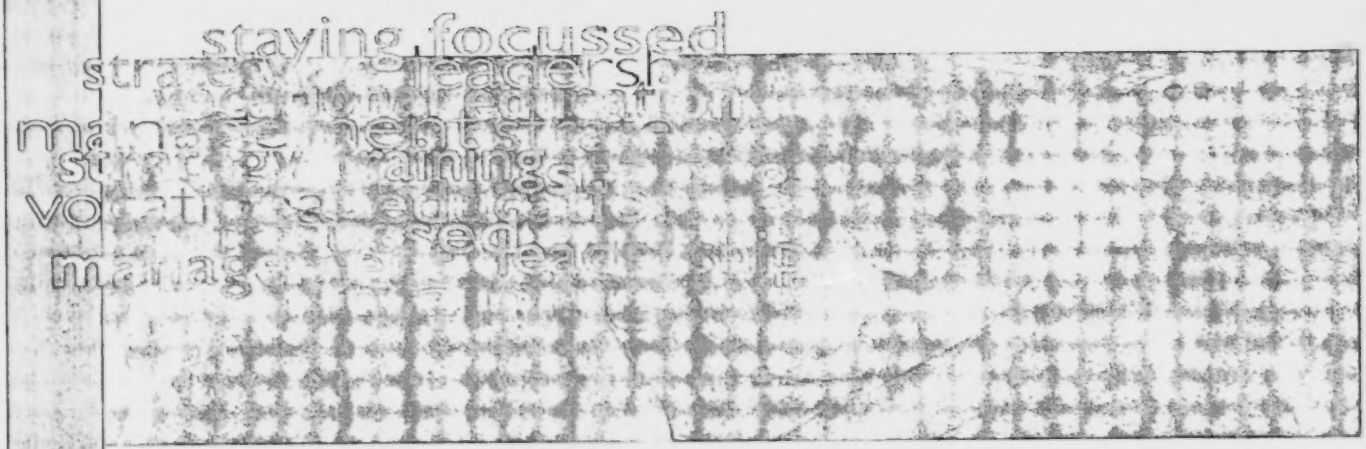

Leadership and management in vocational education and training

Staying focussed on strategy – Volume 2

Dianne Mulcahy

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Publisher's note

This report has been organised into two volumes. Volume 1 contains the detailed report of this project.

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Appendix A

Managerial job titles

ACCOUNT MANAGER/DIRECTOR
ACTING FACULTY DIRECTOR
ADMINISTRATION MANAGER (6)
ADMINISTRATOR (2)
AREA MANAGER (2)
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (2)
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ED PROGRAMS
ASSISTANT FACULTY DIRECTOR
ASSISTANT INSTITUTE DIRECTOR
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR (3)
BRANCH MANAGER (3)
BUSINESS & MARKETING MANAGER
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
BUSINESS DIRECTOR
BUSINESS MANAGER (3)
BUSINESS UNIT MANAGER
BUSINESS UNIT MANAGER (TRAINING)
CAMPUS ADMINISTRATOR
CAMPUS CO-ORDINATOR (2)
CAMPUS MANAGER (9)
CENTRE MANAGER
CEO (40)
CEO - BUSINESS MANAGER
CEO (MANAGING DIRECTOR)
CEO (TAFE DIVISION)
CEO/GENERAL MANAGER
CEO/I D
CEO/MANAGING DIRECTOR
CEO DIRECTOR
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER
CHIEF EDUCATOR/PROPRIETOR
CLUSTER MANAGER (2)
CO-ORDINATOR (2)
CO-PRINCIPAL
COLLEGE DIRECTOR (6)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (2)
EXECUTIVE MANAGER (2)
FACULTY BUSINESS MANAGER
FACULTY DIRECTOR
COLLEGE MANAGER
COLLEGE PRINCIPAL
COMPANY MANAGER (2)
CORPORATE AFFAIRS MANAGER
CURRICULUM CONSULTANT
DEPARTMENT MANAGER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (2)
DIRECTOR - ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
DIRECTOR - PRINCIPAL
DIRECTOR - TAFE SCHOOL OF ENG
DIRECTOR (19)
DIRECTOR - CEO (2)
DIRECTOR/CO-ORDINATOR/TRAINER
DIRECTOR BUSINESS & RURAL STUDIES
DIRECTOR OF A TRAINING DIVISION
DIRECTOR OF CLIENT SERVICES
DIRECTOR OF COUNSELLING & TRAINING
DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS
DIRECTOR OF STUDIES (3)
DIRECTOR OF TRAINING (2)
DIRECTOR RESEARCH AND PLANNING
DIRECTOR T'SERVICES
DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICES
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
DIRECTOR, PLANNING
DIRECTORS (Director)
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
DIVISION MANAGER - TRAINING
DIVISIONAL MANAGER
DVC VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION & ADMIN CO-ORDINATOR
EDUCATION MANAGER (4)
EDUCATIONAL MANAGER
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH & DEV'T
EM3
MANAGER CURRICULUM & LEARNING
MANAGER, FLEXIBLE LEARNING UNIT
MANAGER, PLANNING & ORG DEV
MANAGER, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

GENERAL MANAGER (20)
GM
GOVERNANCE MANAGER
GROUP SCHEME MANAGER
GROUP TRAINING MANAGER
HEAD OF CAMPUS (5)
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
HEAD OF PROGRAM
HEAD OF SCHOOL (2)
HR MANAGER (2)
HR TEAM LEADER
HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING SECURITY MANAGER
HUMAN RESOURCES CO-ORDINATOR
INSTITUTE DIRECTION (Institute Director)
INSTITUTE DIRECTOR (3)
IT MANAGER
JOINT CEO
LECTURER
MANAGER - SEPARATE COMMERCIAL UNIT (SHORT COURSES)
MANAGER - STATE OF RTO
MANAGER (11)
MANAGER (CAMPUS)
MANAGER - PROFESSIONAL ED UNIT
MANAGER DISTRICT OPERATIONS
MANAGER EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVEL
MANAGER EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERV
MANAGER OF SKILLS CENTRE
MANAGER OPERATIONS
MANAGER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
MANAGER TRAINING & QUALITY
MANAGER TRAINING PROGRAMS
MANAGER VIC/TAS
TEACHER/CAREERS ADVISOR
TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER (3)
TRAINING & RECRUITMENT MANAGER
TRAINING ADMINISTRATOR
TRAINING CO-ORDINATOR
TRAINING MANAGER (11)
MANAGING DIRECTOR (13)
MD (2)
NATIONAL DIRECTOR
NATIONAL MGR PROFESSIONAL DEV
NATIONAL TRAINING CONSULTANT
NATIONAL TRAINING MANAGER
OPERATIONS MANAGER (2)
OWNER
PD (Professional Development Manager)
PORTFOLIO MANAGER
PRINCIPAL (8)
PRINCIPAL & CEO
PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF CAMPUS
PRINCIPAL ACADEMIC OFFICER
PRINCIPAL ADMINISTRATOR
PROGRAM CO-ORDINATOR (5)
PROGRAM/CAMPUS MANAGER
PROGRAM DIRECTOR – FRONTLINE
PROGRAM MANAGER (3)
PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR
REGIONAL (Regional Manager)
REGIONAL EDUCATION MANAGER
REGIONAL MANAGER (2)
REGIONAL MANAGER/ACTING
REGISTRAR
SECTOR MANAGER (ASSOC DIRECTOR)
SENIOR CONSULTANT
SENIOR INSTRUCTOR (2)
SENIOR MANAGER (2)
SEO – PLANNING
STATE TRAINING MANAGER
SYSTEMS CO-ORDINATOR
TRAINING SERVICES CO-ORDINATOR
TRAINING SERVICES MANAGER (2)
UNIT MANAGER
VICE PRINCIPAL
VICTORIAN TRAINING MANAGER

Appendix B

Telephone interview schedules

Executive or senior manager

1 Closed respondent data

Type of RTO e.g. TAFE, GTC, private commercial provider	
Position held within organisation e.g. CEO, Director	
Geographic location e.g. Metro/non-metro	
Size of RTO by number of employees: small (1–19); medium (20–99); large (> 100)	
Management structure: no. of levels; organisational units e.g. divisions; gender balance	

2 Open-ended questions

Changing roles and responsibilities

What major changes to your management and leadership roles have you experienced over the last few years?

How have these changes impacted on you and your organisation? You may want to comment from either a personal perspective or an organisational perspective.

What makes for a 'good' VET manager? (What images/practices come to mind?)

What makes for a 'good' VET leader? (As above)

Requirements of these roles

What activities are you typically engaged in when performing your management and leadership roles? Please give examples of specific tasks.

What knowledge and skills do you require in order to perform these roles? (A sketch or broad outline will suffice.)

What are the requirements of your organisation with respect to management and leadership? (e.g. changed structure/culture) How are these requirements being met?

Management and leadership development
What are your major professional development needs, if any, with respect to management and leadership? Are these needs being met? If so, how?

What are your preferred means of professional development with respect to management and leadership? (e.g. formal courses, networking with peers, workshops/seminars/conferences, programs tailored to need?)

Frontline manager

Background note

A 'frontline manager' is a person who is responsible for the co-ordination of the work of others. Frontline managers are first-level or first-line managers. They are typically staff who are described as:

- co-ordinators (e.g. program co-ordinator, course co-ordinator, training co-ordinator)
- managers (program manager, curriculum manager, unit manager, customer services manager)
- head teachers
- leaders (course leader, team leader)
- officers (training officer)
- administrators.

Open-ended questions

Changing roles and responsibilities
What major changes to your management and leadership roles have you experienced over the last few years?

How have these changes impacted on you and your organisation? You may want to comment from either a personal perspective or an organisational perspective.

What makes for a 'good' VET manager? (What images/practices come to mind?)

What makes for a 'good' VET leader? (As above)

Requirements of these roles
What activities are you typically engaged in when performing your management and leadership roles? Please give examples of specific tasks.

What knowledge and skills do you require in order to perform your management and leadership roles? (A sketch or broad outline will do nicely here.)

Management and leadership development
How well-prepared were you for your (first) appointment as a manager? (A sketch or short story will suffice.)

What are your major professional development needs with respect to management and leadership at the present time? Are these needs being met? If so, how?

What are your preferred means of professional development with respect to management and leadership? What development opportunities would you actually like to have? (e.g. formal courses, networking with peers, workshops/seminars/conferences, programs tailored to need?)

Appendix C

Case study observation schedule

Organisation Code:

Dates of Observations:

Observation	Interviewee	Individuals	Management Staff Interaction	Physical Layout	Management/ Leadership Activity	Organisational Displays	Organisation Records
Key Cues:	Characteristic features *At Interview*	Characteristic features *In Workplace*	Patterns of interaction Frequency of interactions Processes used	Signage Inclusive Exclusive	Visibility of CEO Teamwork	Internal orientation External orientation	Strategic plan Mission statement Policies (PD)
Evidence of: Organisational Structure e.g. 'flat' Organisational Ethos – Shared values? (what? values) – orientation to industry – orientation to community – other Organisational Culture – Climate (co-operative/ competitive) – Staff morale – Networks – Interaction –Decision making – Diversity Leadership – Constructs – Locus e.g. situated, distributed – Style Management – Constructs e.g. strategic man. – Style Managerial Functions roles – what functions? – what roles? Management Dev. Activity – High/low – Formal – Informal							

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Appendix D

Case study interview schedules

Executive or senior manager

Closed respondent data

Type of RTO e.g. TAFE, GTC, private commercial provider
Position held within organisation e.g. CEO, Director
Geographic location e.g. Metro/non-metro
Size of RTO by number of employees: small (1–19), medium (20–99), large (> 100)
Management structure: no. of levels; organisational units eg divisions; business units; teaching departments

Open-ended questions

Background

1. Firstly, could you tell me a little about your organisation – provide a short history, as it were e.g. When was it established? What was it set up to do? What is it doing now? What major changes, if any, has it undergone?

2. Secondly, could you tell me a little about yourself e.g. How long have you been in your present position? What is it like to have managerial responsibility within a VET organisation these days? What aspects of the environment in which you operate impinge most on your everyday activity?

Changing roles and requirements of these roles: Individual perspective

3. What major changes to your management and leadership roles have you experienced over the last few years?

4. What particular skills (capabilities, competencies) do you require in order to perform these roles?

5. What activities are you typically engaged in when performing these roles? Please give examples of specific tasks.

6. The findings of various reports on management development highlight the contribution that individual managers who act as leaders can make to the successful management of organisations. What makes for a 'good' VET leader in your view?

7. What kinds of management development, if any, would benefit senior managers in VET and what development opportunities would you, yourself, like to have?

Changing roles and requirements: Organisational perspective

8. What issues with regard to managing and leading is the organisation facing currently?

9. How high a priority is organisational development in your organisation and what form does this development take? (e.g. teams training, organisational learning, leadership skills training)

10. What are some of the key issues facing management and leadership within the VET sector?

11. What practices of management and leadership would you prescribe to improve management and leadership within this sector? e.g. greater strategic focus; greater focus on educational leadership.

12. Is there anything you would like to add with regard to improving management and leadership in VET?

Frontline manager

Background note

A 'frontline manager' is a person who is responsible for the co-ordination of the work of others. Frontline managers are first-level or first-line managers. They may (direct) report to other managers but other managers don't report to them. They are typically staff who are described as:

- head teachers (TAFE NSW)
- co-ordinators (e.g. program co-ordinator, course co-ordinator, training co-ordinator)
- managers (program manager, curriculum manager, unit manager, customer services manager)
- leaders (course leader, team leader, section leader)
- officers (training officer)
- administrators.

Open-ended questions

Background

1. Firstly, could you tell me a little about yourself e.g. How long have you been in your present role? What is it like to have managerial responsibility within a VET organisation these days? What aspects of the environment in which you operate impinge most on your role? e.g. implementation of training packages.

Changing roles and requirements of these roles: Individual perspective

2. What major changes to your management and leadership roles have you experienced over the last few years?

3. How do you see your role in the organisation? Part of management? Just another staff member? The 'ham in the sandwich'?

4. What particular skills do you require in order to perform these roles?

5. What activities are you typically engaged in when performing these roles? Please give examples of specific tasks.

6. The findings of various reports on management development highlight the contribution that individual managers who act as *leaders* can make to the successful management of organisations. What makes for a 'good' VET leader in your view?

7. What kinds of management development, if any, would benefit frontline managers in VET and what development opportunities would you, yourself, like to have?

Changing roles and requirements: Organisational perspective

8. What issues with regard to managing and leading is the organisation facing currently?
9. How high a priority is organisational development in your organisation and what form does this development take? (e.g. teams training, organisational learning, leadership skills training)
10. Some say that change is most evident at the front lines, thus frontline managers fill critical positions within organisations. Is the competence required as a frontline manager similar or different to that required by other managers? What provision is made within the organisation for development at frontline management level?
11. What practices of management and leadership would you prescribe to improve management and leadership within the VET sector? e.g. greater strategic focus; greater focus on educational leadership.
12. Is there anything you would like to add with regard to improving management and leadership in VET?

Manager developer

Background note

A 'manager developer' is a manager who is responsible for the development of other managers or prospective managers in the organisation. Manager developers are staff who have responsibility for professional development (e.g. HR manager) or who take on coaching or mentoring roles.

Open-ended questions

Background

1. Firstly, could you tell me a little about yourself e.g. How long have you been in your present role? What is it like to have managerial responsibility within a VET organisation these days? What aspects of the environment in which you operate impinge most on your role?

Changing roles and requirements of these roles: Individual perspective

2. What major changes to your management and leadership roles have you experienced over the last few years?
3. What particular skills do you require in order to perform these roles?
4. What activities are you typically engaged in when performing these roles? Please give examples of specific tasks.
5. The findings of various reports on management development highlight the contribution that individual managers who act as *leaders* can make to the successful management of organisations. What makes for a 'good' VET leader in your view?
6. What kinds of management development, if any, would benefit managers in VET and what development opportunities would you, yourself, like to have?

Changing roles and requirements: Organisational perspective

7. What issues with regard to managing and leading is the organisation facing currently?
8. How high a priority is organisational development in your organisation and what form does this development typically take? (e.g. teams training, organisational learning, leadership skills training)

9. Some say that change is most evident at the front lines, thus frontline managers fill critical positions within organisations. Is the competence required as a frontline manager similar or different to that required by other managers? What provision is made within the organisation for development at frontline management level?

10. What are some of the key issues facing management and leadership within the VET sector?

11. What practices of management and leadership would you prescribe to improve management and leadership within this sector? e.g. greater strategic focus; greater focus on educational leadership.

12. Is there anything you would like to add with regard to improving management and leadership in VET?

Staff member 1

Open-ended questions

Background

1. Firstly, could you tell me a little about yourself e.g. How long have you been in your present role? What is it like to be working within a VET organisation these days? What aspects of the environment in which you operate impinge most on your role? (e.g. implementation of training packages; casualisation of workforce)

Changing roles and requirements of these roles: Individual perspective

2. With respect to organisational management and leadership, what major changes have you experienced over the last few years?

3. Do you consider your organisation well-managed and led? How do you account for this situation?

4. What makes for a 'good' VET manager? What skills do these managers display?

5. What makes for a 'good' VET leader? What skills do these leaders demonstrate?

6. How would you describe the ethos (philosophy, culture) of management and leadership within your organisation? What phrase or image comes to mind?

7. Given that staff are now expected perform management and leadership roles, for example, lead learning through building curriculum from training packages, what management development opportunities, if any, would you, yourself, like to have?

Changing roles and requirements: Organisational perspective

8. What issues with regard to managing and leading is the organisation facing currently?

9. How high a priority is organisational development in your organisation and what form does this development take? (e.g. teams training, organisational learning, leadership skills training)

10. How high a priority is staff development in your organisation and what form does this development take? (e.g. support for individuals to pursue further study)

11. Some say that change is most evident at the front lines, thus frontline managers fill critical positions within organisations. As a staff member (who reports to a frontline manager), what is your view? Do frontline managers fill critical positions within your organisation? If so, how?

12. Is there anything you would like to add with regard to improving management and leadership within VET?

Staff member 2

Open-ended questions

Background

1. Firstly, could you tell me a little about yourself e.g. How long have you been in your present role? What is it like to be working within a VET organisation these days? What aspects of the environment in which you operate impinge most on your role? (e.g. implementation of training packages; casualisation of workforce)

Changing roles and requirements of these roles: Individual perspective

2. With respect to organisational management and leadership, what major changes have you experienced over the last few years?
3. Do you consider your organisation well-managed and led? How do you account for this situation?
4. What makes for a 'good' VET manager? What skills do these managers display?
5. What makes for a 'good' VET leader? What skills do these leaders demonstrate?
6. How would you describe the ethos (philosophy, culture) of management and leadership within your organisation? What phrase or image comes to mind?
7. Given that staff are now expected perform management and leadership roles, for example, lead learning through building curriculum from training packages, what management development opportunities, if any, would you, yourself, like to have?

Changing roles and requirements: Organisational perspective

8. What issues with regard to managing and leading is the organisation facing currently?
9. How high a priority is organisational development in your organisation and what form does this development take? (e.g. teams training, organisational learning, leadership skills training)
10. How high a priority is staff development in your organisation and what form does this development take? (e.g. support for individuals to pursue further study)
11. Some say that change is most evident at the front lines, thus frontline managers fill critical positions within organisations. As a staff member (who reports to a frontline manager), what is your view? Do frontline managers fill critical positions within your organisation? If so, how?
12. Is there anything you would like to add with regard to improving management and leadership within VET?

Appendix E

Case studies

Bush TAFE

The journey inland traces the steps taken by European farmers who followed the river course to this rolling valley and then cleared land to establish the first settlements. They were joined later by migrants coming from countries torn by the Second World War. Both groups helped create this agricultural community on the edge of the wheat belt. Surrounded by hills, the small town which is home to Bush TAFE, revolves around a single main street where buildings stand proudly, but intermittently, close to the sole operating inland rail line. The town spreads across the valley floor with generous property blocks. Bush TAFE forms part of a planned community support district, comprising schools, childcare facilities and hospitals.

The new single-storey buildings, with vaulted ceilings, form a small campus that is immediately attractive. Its gardens snake around each individual building and its interconnecting paths. Despite dry weather and an intensely hot climate, the gardens are flourishing. 'Traineeships' are clearly marketed through prominent signage on the external buildings. A high-quality reception area which displays the Investors in People Award presents a welcome to visitors and students. Visions and mission statements declare the college's intentions while premiers' awards and trainee awards provide evidence of its achievements. The reception area is relaxed, and yet the front counter employees are busy and attentive. The sign on the counter states that: 'A little bit of training goes a long, long way'. Visitors are invited to comment on the college services and forms, pens and envelopes are provided. There is an atmosphere of space, transparency and openness.

In and out of independence: A second chance

Bush TAFE has five campuses spread throughout the wheat belt area of Western Australia. It was originally granted autonomy under the Vocational Education and Training Act in 1996, however, this was later revoked. In January 2000, the college had a second chance at independence with a new management style and a string of national and state-based awards. Along with having a second 'go at it', training packages and the new Australian Quality Training Framework have made the 'examination of how we do things' part of the landscape at Bush TAFE. These developments, along with small numbers of students and staff, and vast distances travelled, add to the challenges facing Bush TAFE:

> [Autonomy] has meant that we have had to develop systems and procedures that were really non-existent in the past—the Department of Training looked after that stuff and we got on with the business of teaching. But they have said: 'Well now you go and find your own way' so policies and procedures and strategies, and all those things you have, has been one significant impact. Training packages have also had a major impact and we are still wrestling with that. So a combination of those things and lack of numbers, student numbers and staff numbers, and vast distances, really makes it tough out here.

These challenges, having come around the same time, have provided opportunities for staff to look at their practices and seek potential advantages in being part of a community. Working together to

find solutions to problems is very much a part of the culture of a rural community and Bush TAFE reflects this culture. Being more community-based, the transition to workplace learning has been easier for Bush TAFE than the metropolitan colleges. At Bush TAFE, they actually pride themselves on finding local solutions to problems, thus, delivering training to 'thin markets' *is* their business.

> I think because we are in a very thin market here, we have had to adapt our delivery strategies to meet the community needs.

> I think it's easier here, in some ways, because you know the people and get out and see them. I asked a question of one of the bigger colleges in the state: 'How do you deal with a new Training Package in workplace training?' and the answer was: 'We aren't prepared for it so we don't do it'. Which means they sort of like the old block system. Well they've got a big building to fill and they have large numbers. We don't have that kind of luxury. Sure the block system is the easier way to service training, no question about it, but it's not what our employers want.

Being close to their community has also meant that staff are quite flexible in their work practices. They are well used to working across campuses, thus the policy imperative to implement training packages and get out into industry is 'business as usual':

> In many ways our college was well prepared [for training packages] because we were already out there doing it, being extremely flexible. So the 'talking heads in classroom situation', which was the main way of delivering in the sector up until four years ago, has never really been our core business here. We've been focussed on traineeships, and we've also focussed on working really closely with industry [including] employing industry people to help deliver some of the training and assessment. So changing the focus away from 'face-to-face' type learning into workplace learning, which is more outcome based, has been really beneficial and probably easier for us than our city cousins.

Managing change: 'We have to do a lot of complex scheduling'

While staff at Bush TAFE appear to have taken the change to training packages and employment-based training in their stride, issues have arisen that have required skillful management and leadership. Bush TAFE was quick to respond to the national push to increase the take-up of traineeships and apprenticeships and, at the last count, was responsible for 70% of the delivery of employment-based training in rural Western Australia. The challenges and pressures placed on staff to manage this commitment are extreme, the most significant of these challenges being the vast distances involved in servicing these students and employers. Some staff are travelling up to two to three thousand kilometres per week, armed with a car, laptop and mobile phone:

> I've got one lecturer here today, I called her into a meeting today, she's doing about 3000 kilometres this week, so that's kind of average. It is expensive in all sorts of ways, I mean not just in standard teaching time, and travel, it's expensive in personal loss time as well, it has a double negative. It is very exhausting and you can burn out staff very quickly. So you have to be aware of the family implications and that they must have a life as well.

Managing mobile staff over vast distances presents a number of issues for managers and leaders in rural TAFE colleges:

> The disadvantage is the huge distances between one participant or trainee and another. You've got the cost of running a car, fuel, you've got the lecturers' time, even before they start delivering or assessing. We've had to come up with protocols and some special conditions for our college to maintain staff, otherwise if they are not getting paid to be driving around the region to see these students, then they'll leave TAFE. So to make it possible for us to do that—to provide a lecturer with a car, a lap top, and a mobile phone (because they've got to be contactable at all different times of the year, right through the holidays)—we have to do a lot of complex scheduling and time tabling. We need to find savings in other areas to allow us this flexibility. This requires us to make efficiencies in other areas like our

> classroom-based and external correspondence delivery so that we can channel any excess funds into both supporting employment-based training and our staff.

Those charged with implementing training packages and conducting employment-based training are also required to skillfully perform management and leadership roles. The new initiatives can mean that TAFE staff are working with employers who are unable to meet their training obligations under the new arrangements and need advice and assistance.

Staff report that there is an incompatibility between a training package design devised by major, nationally representative employers and rural communities where, for the most part, industry contact involves just one person in a small business with one or two employees and an apprentice or trainee. Employers see the concept of on-the-job training as a boon, particularly when, in the past, they may not have had their trainee or apprentice during the peak times such as seeding, harvesting and shearing. Staff see it somewhat differently. Employers are not always able to 'pick up' the required training:

> Under the old apprenticeship system of block release, each student would get eight weeks of training in TAFE. Under the training packages arrangements, our obligation is five visits (per year), well what has happened to the other seven weeks and four days? Well it means that the employer, in partnership with us, has to pick up that training … it has only dawned on me that that is a requirement. It certainly hasn't dawned on the employers and the employers we have are all small employers. Training packages to me were driven by the BHPs, the Caterpillars and the Alcoas of the world and the system works really well for them. But for the bloke that has got himself and one other employee and trainee, well he just doesn't have that sort of capacity, let alone the expertise to mentor and train his staff.

Managerial roles and tasks: The importance of innovation ideas

The implications of the move towards employment-based training and the increase in distances that lecturing staff now travel, as well as the introduction of technology-based learning, are not reflected in the funding of public training organisations such as Bush TAFE. So this has meant that alternative sources of funding in the form of fee-for-service have become part of the delivery strategy.

In a rural community this has not been easy. In a metropolitan college, innovation is often associated with technology solutions for training and delivery. Innovation in rural communities is more about developing opportunities, building networks and capitalising on what they do best.

> Our primary industries area has almost more than doubled [in delivery] in the past twelve months. As you would imagine in a wheat belt area, primary industries would be one of the main growth areas. In actual fact it was quite stagnant and nothing was happening because people hadn't thought of: 'Well how can we deliver to farmers when they are out there busy harvesting etc.?' So the innovation was to sell the concept of training to farmers for their children, to employ their own families as trainees, and to, I guess, make the farmer, if you like, part of, involved in the training. So we put the owner/operators or farmers through skills recognition to build up a philosophy of training and to develop a confidence, and I guess for them to realise how important training is. Because the farm may not always be there but that person will need to move on into some articulated program or move into another employment area. So having training, or a qualification, is quite important. So first of all you've got to sell that concept, then once you've sold that concept to them, you then sell the concept of them training their own people in their own workplace. We [Bush TAFE] come in and facilitate and organise and assess; they will do some of the training but we will do all of the assessment.

Expanding fee-for-service activity has been one of the major tasks that managers at Bush TAFE have had to tackle. Achieving this expansion is a matter of convincing staff that 'you can't be

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everything to everybody, that you have to do what you do best and make yourself a real mark in that area':

> The increase in fee-for-service was … difficult. You had to really convince staff [lecturing, administration staff and management] that you could do it if you really streamlined and focussed on what we could do best.

Building relationships and networks in different ways assists Bush TAFE in building its business, both its fee-for-service and profile delivery:

> Fee-for-service activity has been a major move for this particular college. In the metropolitan area, fee-for-service activity could be as much as $100 an hour for someone to be trained. So to set up some sort of fee-for-service activity like that in a regional college is very difficult because people just don't have the money out here to be able to do it. You have a very thin market, sparse population, [people] with limited funds and you've got limited programs that you can offer because you've got limited expertise. So setting it up was quite difficult at first, but what we did was focus on what we did best, which was primary industries, and we focussed on grain, because grain is the big production out here in the wheat belt. And we built up a collaboration with the big co-operative bulk handling organisation and we've now put certificate 3 in grains online … We are delivering online to people across the whole area, even outside our region, because people can access the training. We're taking that overseas shortly because it's been so successful. To India, Canada and South East Asia.

Using technology to build internal networks: 'We've had to make it work for us'

Distance was a clear theme in the interviews conducted at Bush TAFE. In order to ensure the Bush TAFE community can continue to develop their networks, exchange ideas and learn from each other, the college uses both tele-conferencing and video-conferencing facilities:

> … people think that if you are in the country you are behind the times in terms of technology, but in actual fact I believe in many respects we're ahead of the times with technology. Because of distance, we've had to make it work for us rather than us working for the technology.

> … if we're trying to pull a group of people together whether they are lecturers or trainees in a work group, we will bring them into any one of our four campuses and we will deliver here from our main campus. We'll tele-conference, or we will video-conference through the digital web all of the information, so that our lecturer will be talking to students in all different locations, and that works really well. We even do some of our inductions through video-conferencing as well as our meetings. So we are able to pull the organisation together and communicate with them that way. Often email can be a little bit slow and unreliable, as compared with video-conferencing, so we find that if we're having a meeting we can go through all of the issues, debate things, and it's all live.

Managing upwards: Keeping lecturers in the loop

Management seem to have taken staff with them on the journey. There is a real sense in the data that management does invest in their people. Management is very inclusive of staff. The Director, in particular, wanted the staff to be there and actively sought their input when problem-solving and decision-making.

> I encourage my staff to manage upwards, because if I don't, how will I know what's happening. You know, I might make a decision that may not be in keeping with the general feeling of the community or the staff. … It's very difficult to make a decision if you're not well informed, so I need my six managers … to manage upwards and tell me what it is they need to get their job done properly so that I can make changes accordingly.

In order to motivate staff and promote the growth of networks internally and externally, staff are encouraged to be part of educational management. Management shows an interest in what all staff think and feel by being accessible, by actively listening to staff, and by ensuring staff know that they matter. Over the course of the interview with the Director, she frequently reflected on her own experience as a lecturer. Clearly, this has shaped the way she now manages:

> When I worked as a lecturer in a metropolitan college, I mean you hardly ever saw the MD, you very rarely communicated with the Directors, and the lecturers had their little team meetings. We didn't get an opportunity to communicate with people at a higher level and after a while you got the feeling that maybe your views weren't valued. In a small organisation like ours, you can't afford to do that. I'm not suggesting that they can really afford to do that in the city either, but you certainly can't in a small organisation because you're living in the community with them. It is critical to be doing the 'walk and talk' around the campus and taking an interest in what they are doing and you need to be praising them. You can't afford to lose lecturers who are doing all the hard work at the coal face, by keeping them out of the loop.

Management development: 'Let people grow and network and communicate'

Formal training to prepare staff for the experience of Bush TAFE is negotiated on an individual basis with Frontline Initiative training a popular course of action for program managers and principal lecturers. But the vast majority of learning for leadership and management happens by experience and participation on committees, attendance at conferences and networking with colleagues both intra-state and inter-state.

One of the principal lecturers explained his experience:

> I spent this last 6 months [on] a flexible learning leaders' professional development grant, so I spent a lot of the last six months travelling interstate, running down to the sheds and speaking to people in similar situations. It was just a marvellous experience.

For the Director, strategic membership of groups at state level is about being able to improve college strategy, including the delivery of education; it's about gaining ideas of how to get better industry contacts and about how to run employment-based training in a more effective way:

> I can take to these groups initiatives that have worked really well for our college, and share that information across the sector; they can then go and do the same thing in their colleges and it helps the customer and employer. At the same time, I will go to these groups and meet and network with other people and they will give me information that I can come back with and use here as well. So it's a fabulous opportunity and I think really letting people grow and network and communicate and just empower them is the best way you can grow any business and the best way that you can, I guess, build up that confidence in all levels of the organisation.

The most important quality, internally, is inclusivity; externally it is about networks, partnerships, and having credibility in the wider community: 'The stuff that I think is … beneficial in building up business for my unit is out there—talking to people and networking' (Frontline manager).

Issues outstanding and futures for Bush TAFE

Bush TAFE has not been sheltered from the policy 'imperative' to increase fee-for-service to cover shortfalls in government funding. Accordingly, this has meant that the managerial focus, and the roles and tasks that flow from this focus, have had to shift to embrace business functions and concepts:

> The old bureaucratic-type management style doesn't work when you're wanting to pull people through change … you have to have very transparent business practices, so there's been a very big shift.

This shift has been effected however, without too much damage being done to educational ideas.

Bush TAFE seems to have combined business and educational functions quite successfully. Lecturing staff were deemed well able to respond adequately to the new demands:

> I also notice that people are out there looking for opportunities … They are coming back to me and saying: 'Oh, have you heard such and such?' (Frontline manager)

Management clearly see that they are in the business of business management *and* of educational management and lecturing staff are valued for the job that they do:

> Well our core business is education. That's what some TAFE colleges haven't quite figured out. Some colleges have taken a while to realise that their core business is delivery, training and education. … If we don't get the training and delivery in education right, we don't have any services to offer, we don't have any customers, we don't have a business.

The key to success at Bush TAFE is knowing about the world and relating to the local environment, seeing what the options are and making choices and localising ideas. Skills in management and leadership happen at all levels: lecturers are now managing the learning journey and assisting both employers and students to navigate the concept of employment-based training and what it means to them. Managers are managing internal relationships at an operational level and externally at a more strategic level.

While enthusiasm and passion are in abundance at Bush TAFE, and change has been embraced at all levels, the lecturing staff harbour some concerns about the impact of national and statewide initiatives. At Bush TAFE, it is the lecturers who are picking up the administrative requirements that come with the new demands:

> … If we could pull some of the admin. pressure off the teaching staff that would be good. There is all this pressure on you to deliver your hours and then there is pressure to do the administration. For instance, because of AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework], we are having an assessment audit and I just don't honestly have the time. Like: 'Yes you are on the list but what else don't I do!' Like: 'Do you want me to deliver courses or do you want me to fiddle around with the assessment tools? Do you want me to meet the profile or what?' With the implementation of new government agendas such as AQTF, training packages, graded assessment, they all come with more paper work which the teaching staff have to pick up. On their own they are probably OK, but at the moment they are all coming in at the same time.

I have no doubt that Bush TAFE through its networking, its sharing of ideas and its capacity to problem-solve in teams and in an open and transparent way will address and resolve this current issue. After all, they are Investors in People.

Esteemed RTO

Although not located in a purpose-built training venue, this college has as they say, location, location. Esteemed RTO (registered training organisation) is in the very centre of a major metropolitan city's central business district. It is a single campus site within two levels of an older building. The building has been extensively renovated to accommodate the need for specialist teaching areas and in particular, access to multiple computer workstations. Access to the reception area of the Esteemed RTO is by stairs or lift. The approach consists of a minimum of unused space and has a focus on functional utility. A colourful sandwich-board sign on the ground level is the only prominent sign of an educational institution residing within the building. Courses available at the Esteemed RTO include the traditional business courses, and two major innovative areas—multi-media and clothing production.

'Over 40 years of excellence' is a prominent claim in the promotional literature of Esteemed RTO. As the ex-Principal of the Esteemed RTO explained: '… everyone has a grandmother who probably

came here'. The organisation also claims through its promotional literature to be the 'most reputable private training provider' in the metropolitan area. This literature sends a strong message of having a continuous intake of students, and a free employment placement service for students.

Overall, observers quickly appreciate that for this registered training organisation, if location isn't critical, then profile is. The importance of location and profile, as key elements of the traditional commercial enterprise, is complemented by a concern for financial reality:

> We are probably the most expensive private provider in our area, but we don't often get students from high-profile private schools. A lot of our students come from lower socio-economic areas and I think it could ... be because their parents know of [Esteemed RTO]. I think the history of [Esteemed RTO] helps us a lot. (Frontline manager)

The organisation structure is somewhat confusing. While there are three Directors of the company, only two are active in the operations, one as Principal, and one as Managing Director. The Principal however, sees himself as '...really more Business Manager.' A third, key person, the Education Manager, reports to both the Principal and the Managing Director, and has, in turn, fourteen to fifteen staff reporting to her.

The staffer responsible for information technology articulated the character of organisational management best by summarising it in the following non-judgmental way: 'A is a Director but still takes direction from B. B is the boss. Then you have A and C; A is Principal but C still has a lot to say'.

Multiple managerial roles: 'We have to find that middle ground'

The Principal of the Esteemed RTO has formal qualifications and experience in financial and education environments. He explained that one of his main responsibilities, and challenges, is financial management:

> The biggest problem that we have, from a financial point of view, always is cash flow. We are solely relying on numbers through the door, so if we are struggling for that, we will struggle financially. We have to focus heavily on collecting fees, otherwise we are out of business because we have no other income.

Having identified the importance of financial management, the executive manager also stated that VET managers have a much broader role to fulfill:

> A good manager needs to be able to manage, speaking for this organisation, you have varying groups of staff, instructional staff who are basically teachers, admissions people who are trying to get people in the door, and the administration staff, so you need to be able to manage each of those different areas of staff and understand where they are coming from and what they see as important.

The tension between financial management and quality education was a common theme throughout all interviews at this organisation. The Principal, for example, claimed:

> It would be easy to make a profit in this business. ... We could jam heaps of people in, off you go. They would have the competencies, supposedly, because they would have met the assessment task, etc. but as far as being skills-based I don't think that is the way to go. We don't do that. We prefer to make sure the education standards are high. ... We have to find that middle ground whereby we maximise the quality education we have been doing to the best of our abilities, while making sure we have some profit to build for the future.

The Managing Director, as the previous Principal and initiator of the privatisation of the Esteemed RTO's predecessor organisation in the mid-1990s, has been, and remains, one of the major change agents of the organisation. His version of the tension between financial survival and educational delivery by good management includes a personal cum organisational vision:

> We tried to get people who believed in education and seemed to have a creative flair, some of which I found in existing employees, others I found through interviews. My idea of what a manager is is two things, the first—and maybe most important—is that the job of a manager is not to rant and rave and complain about work not being done; it is better to train people in how it should be done. As a manager, I have always thought that my job is to knock down barricades so that my managers below me can actually work.

The frontline manager also emphasised the importance of educational outcomes as they impacted on the selection of staff for (organisational) cultural consistency.

> When we are interviewing prospective staff members, we really push whether or not they can get up there and teach in front of a whiteboard. If they hesitate, that will show me usually that they can't actually teach and that they would prefer the students to go home and read the chapters, etc. but it is really important that we don't do that here.

Achieving sound educational outcomes through traditional teaching methods would appear to meet the needs of the Esteemed RTOs immediate clients (individual students, parents). Employers have confidence in the skills developed through this provider and approach it directly for prospective employees. Esteemed RTO functions not only as a training provider but also an employment placement service, a productive combination of educational and business roles:

> We have been in the business marketing area the longest, so over a number of years we have built up rapport with a lot of employers, so much so that we assist with placement of students … They know the skills a person coming from here will have, and they approach us directly, rather than advertise. (Principal)

Role requirements: 'Management has to be done horizontally'

The Managing Director believes that managers need to understand their areas of responsibility well:

> I think you have to know your job very well. You have to be empathetic to: 'If I do my job successfully, what are the downsides that it might create for another Department (of the organisation?)'.

This understanding is best achieved through communication between organisational sections:

> I firmly believe that management has to be done horizontally. You can't hire or allow managers to think that, this is my only concern, I am going to do my job, draw my pay cheque, and this is the goal. All of our goals here are community goals or across the board.

and commitment to long-term outcomes:

> And I also tell them that a good manager is best judged after they're gone. If you set up an organisation so that when you're gone, it keeps running, then you're a good manager.

Knowledge management emerged as a particular focus at Esteemed RTO. The notion of knowledge management appeared to act as an organising idea for management at large. In practice, it involved sharing local knowledge—the tradition and history developed within the organisation—through regular staff meetings and calling upon this knowledge to accomplish organisational goals ('community goals'). In the view of the Managing Director, 'management is much like IT in an organisation':

> The new term I guess is knowledge management. … It's about the history of the company. It's about if I do this in my Department, I can't make this decision until I know how it affects all the other Departments and in order to do that I have to understand their Department.
>
> I think management is much like IT in an organisation; it has to be done horizontally, not vertically. IT is not a department separate from everything else; it is a part of every department. Just because you are the manager of one department, it does not mean that you don't need or can't know the history of all departments.

The frontline manager perceived that the role of managers, as well as the process of management, concerns the whole organisation. She placed particular emphasis on 'linking' the organisation:

> This year we have started to have meetings involving different things and different people, online training, fashion—we are trying to be a lot more accountable now as a college and incorporate the different departments so that everyone has a say in what is happening. Previously, we were very stand-alone and management would make the decisions and do all the leg-work as well. We're trying to make sure that it's all really inclusive and everyone has their say.

This manager also reflected on her role as one that was continually evolving:

> It is a real necessity for us to think about taking this college further and I need to be able to devote my time to pure management issues and decision-making processes, as well as dealing with students on a day-to-day basis.

Staff perceptions: 'It is an unusual form of management'

Staff see the role of managers, and the management of Esteemed RTO, more pragmatically, and within a shorter timeframe:

> The organisational structure has become a little bit more severe. Whilst they have added an extra player into the management life of the college, it has changed the dynamics of the college. It is an unusual form of management. It is very flexible, a very loose form of management. I don't think it is good all the time, but on occasions I think it is quite good.

This staffer also had an interesting perception of the managers and their role, and the 'failings' of all staff at Esteemed RTO. He supported a more traditional form of management where managers provide order and consistency, take charge of situations, plan and see things through:

> A good manager would be an active manager, somebody who is involved, hands-on. The management style here is very much: 'I believe in you so you go ahead and do what you know I want you to do', without much direction. You are given a lot of freedom and flexibility, and, as a consequence, it is human nature that you don't always do what you have to do, or you start it but you don't finish it. There is no seeing things through to the end … There are a lot of great ideas, projects that get started and talked about, but there is not a lot of planning and seeing things through to the end. You need people who can not only come up with the ideas but follow the process right through to the end, and if you are going to get other people to do it for you, you still need to be there, facilitate meetings, get reports, get results, until the project is finished. That is what is not happening in this organisation.

The management at Esteemed RTO think typically about 'expand[ing] our undertakings' and 'how we can compete nationally and globally'.

> At the start of this year, we went into Public Relations. Next year we will not add any more courses, but we are going to be doing a big push for internet training. We hope to open up our services to remote areas in [x state] and then take it internationally or nationally.
>
> (Frontline manager)

It could be argued that the expansion of activities—adding more—has been so rapid that staff are doing 'catch up'. Staff at all levels returned to the tension of balancing key objectives at Esteemed RTO, that is, financial survival and quality education outcomes.

> I think the people who are here are here because they believe in the place, they believe in the courses and the quality of the courses. (Staff member)

> We were very reluctant to go into competency-based training. I think the majority of our instructors would still prefer percentage-based results. Competency-based is something that we initially felt led to mediocrity—a lot of students would come and say: 'I can just get a competency, it is too hard to get anything else, why should we bother doing much else'. As

management, we have had a real struggle with that and we have allowed students to get distinctions and credits. (Frontline manager)

Aligning multiple roles, achieving consistent practice: 'We want to make our focus our students'

The Managing Director was very aware of the need for consistent organisational development within Esteemed RTO and commented on the recent implementation of processes to take this development forward:

> … a couple of months ago, we insisted that people have regular meetings whether it be as partners [working on] an idea [or whatever] … I need to get those people who have a common thread to be involved with more meetings.

While organisational practice is constantly changing and adapting, he emphasised the need for this practice to be congruent with the underpinning culture of the organisation:

> I want our instructors to have done or be doing what we are training our students to do. So I encourage them to have their own businesses, their own freelancing … I told all these folks from day one: 'This is not the end of the road, this is not [your] last job'. [If] they just do a great job for me while they are here … I will do everything I can to help them … We just want them to want to do it, to want to show up for work, to want to be excited.

The frontline manager gave a clear example of the role of managers and management decision-making and the tensions involved in aligning existing and new roles and practices:

> Our push has basically been to try to keep our costs low and to do that we needed to expand into a wider range of different industry areas. About 3 months ago, a travel academy went into bankruptcy, last year another business college went into bankruptcy and was taken over by another private provider. … Our aim each year has been to add another industry area.
>
> That was a real turning point. A lot of the previous, more mature staff members did not like the idea of going into different industry areas, because what would that do to their students and the college, but at the end of the day the management team decided that it was an absolute necessity because we didn't want to be another provider that went bankrupt.

This overt acknowledgement of the tension between financial demands and educational outcomes was not pre-eminent in the initial stages of the discussion with the frontline manager. Interestingly, it was also not evident in her responses to the national survey of managers which, along with the telephone interviews and the case studies (including the study of Esteemed RTO), formed the means of collecting empirical data for this research project. 'Seeking extra funding' and 'balancing entrepreneurial capability with educational function' in the survey were rated relatively less critical, or less pressing, than other challenges and issues.

Another example of how this tension manifests itself was provided in a comment on staff reimbursement:

> The problem will always be that our instructors won't be paid nearly as much as they would in a university setting, in a pure business setting, or in a TAFE system, so the attraction has to be that they want to teach here and they want to have the one-on-one with the students. (Frontline manager)

Educational functions, which are at the same time business functions, are central to the success of Esteemed RTO. It competes on the basis of superior service and quality product. The focus in this provider was squarely on student/client satisfaction:

> We don't do traineeships and we don't do anything that is government-assisted. We don't have the man- or woman-power to do a lot of the things that go to tender, we don't have those extra staff members to do that. It is impossible when we want to make our focus our students. (Frontline manager)

> I taught at TAFE for a while and had to booklet-teach. … I just didn't find that that was a proper way to teach. We have been very strong on that. We can cut costs if we do booklet-teach, because we can have 1 or 2 different courses in the class, but we don't want to do that because of the fact that that is our bargaining power with parents at the end of the day. They know that if their child is having trouble, then we can assist them one-on-one, and they are going to be incorporated into a team, and not just: 'Here is a booklet, go and read it.
>
> (Frontline manager)

Developing future managers: 'It comes back to the same old thing of money and time'

In discussing the development of future managers, the Principal appeared to set the tone for the organisation, stating that any new manager to the Esteemed RTO would require an ability to respond simultaneously to financial and educational matters.

> I have always told staff that I would prefer to make less profit if it meant that the education was delivered. But I can't have the education delivered in the best possible way and then make a loss. I have to deliver it the best we possibly can, being mindful of financial and resource restraints that we have.

In terms of internal staff development, the discussions with the two staff members are perhaps the most telling. When asked about support or encouragement for staff development, the responses included:

> I think there is if you want to, but it is not coming from above and down. If you want to, then nothing is there to stop you. I don't see it as a policy or a commitment, in black and white, for the college to follow. … It is not something that is pushed here, but you know that you can attain any training that you want to do within the college. There are management courses that we run at night and during the day, and I have done 'Managing organisations' at night. (Staff member 1)

> It is not a priority here. The priority is teaching and paying the bills and surviving. We just don't have the money or the resources to train people, groom them into what they should be. Number One is, make sure the place is working. If a computer is broken, forget about all the other stuff, just get that thing working. (Staff member 2)

In terms of being prepared as frontline managers and being aware of relevant issues, the staff felt somewhat unprepared:

> I think they know what they [organisational plans] are but they don't always filter them down or formalise them. I feel like I am a little bit enclosed in this environment and don't have an awareness of what is going on outside in the VET sector. Maybe I should be more aware, I'm not sure. I think I'm so frantically trying to keep the Department running internally that I don't tend to view up in terms of where we are in the whole big picture.
>
> I believe I could do a lot of the leadership stuff if it was in my area. I know how to delegate and to show people how to do things. But if I was going to be doing a lot of managerial stuff, I wouldn't have the training or the knowledge to be someone responsible for a whole bunch of people. I would need to acquire that sort of knowledge.
>
> It comes back to the same old thing of money and time. Managers will listen to you, but regarding staff training, because we lack what is required, a lot of it comes down to: 'Sure we want you to learn this—can you do it in your own time?'
>
> If we have to do a new module, that is all well and good. But if I say I would like to learn something to enhance my job, they say: 'Yes, but you will have to work something out'. If it is not to do with something that is needed in class, you have to do it by negotiation.

Although optio s and support for frontline management development were seen as less than desirable, staff saw the role of the frontline manager as critical to the operation of the organisation. Both management and staff also saw a need for wider scanning of their organisational landscape:

> I think it is critical. I think it is because we can see both sides of the coin and that we are there, we are the doers, we are the ones who make it happen. We have the consultation and the comments, and the feedback, and the day-to-day relationships with people.
>
> (Staff member 1)

> We have not helped set up as much outside training as we could for those who are not as creative in their own personal development. Some people will take it if we give them the opportunity but aren't at that point in life where they are motivated to do it.
>
> (Managing Director)

> When I started here six years ago, we did not have very much representation by industry in helping us to run our courses. We do try and keep in touch with industry.
>
> (Frontline manager)

Looking back and forward …

The more prominent aspects of the Esteemed RTO appear to include:

- the balancing of a private organisation's need to generate profit with a management philosophy of quality education. In striking this balance, Esteemed RTO makes no use of government funding via traineeships and similar schemes:

> It's not cost-effective for us to take those sort of people (apprentices, trainees) on. ... We have tried to make something that we believe will be better for the community, for us too I suppose, but also for the community and future skills base that they have available.
>
> (Principal)

- a preparedness to expand, not only by adding new courses and industry areas, but also managing projects off-shore:

> We have had a few projects and some we have said 'No' to but some we keep working on every now and then, one of which is dealing with an organisation to help train Chinese students.
>
> (Frontline manager)

- a uniqueness or competitive edge based on flexibility and the student-centred outcomes of employment:

> I think we offer something fairly unique in [this state] and a lot of people are looking further into their educational choices, rather than just universities. … Vocational training is very much a reality now as an option, alongside university.
>
> (Staff member 1)

The staff and students of the Esteemed RTO take pride in 'doing it different', and with apparent success in the eyes of their graduates and their 'sponsors', usually family members. As the organisation makes plans to put in place their vision to grow to 1000 students by 2006, and be a major competitor with TAFE, one major issue appears to be unresolved. The selection and development of staff to act as frontline managers, is only now partially acknowledged as a management function that requires resourcing and strategic planning. The continued success of the Esteemed RTO may well lie in how well it can transfer existing individuals' knowledge and philosophy to an increasing number of critically placed, frontline managers of the near future.

Four Seasons TAFE

Four Seasons TAFE is relatively small when compared with most TAFEs in the VET sector. The headquarters of this four-campus institute of TAFE is a purpose-built community training centre, integrated with a local council library. It is adjacent to a large and prosperous suburban shopping

complex. However, the link with the community library hasn't worked and there will be a mutually agreed relocation of the library away from the campus into the shopping complex. This is advantageous to the Four Seasons TAFE as it will free more space for a 'natural' investment in an information technology commercial centre. The institute is a product of amalgamation, consequently, its campuses vary somewhat in terms of cohesion and team spirit, and campus/program loyalty versus institute loyalty. There is however, an apparent commitment to and success in the pursuit of excellence in education and training, as well as in corporate management and corporate governance.

The Executive Director sets the tone for this particular pursuit and has accomplished a great deal. Four Seasons TAFE is widely recognised as being in the top league, via a number of national TAFE and ANTA awards for outstanding achievement. It has gained a reputation in the TAFE sector with respect to leading innovation in competency-based learning and flexible learning. Across the four campuses, it has a unique mix of 'hard' and 'soft' program areas such as technical production trades, information technology, horticulture, veterinary and applied sciences, arts and crafts and community services.

A product of collective work, the organisational culture of Four Seasons is an innovative and team-oriented one. According to the Executive Director, 'the feel of the place is distinctive'. In line with the 'close institute culture', the flat organisational structure made it somewhat difficult to identify frontline management within the organisation. There were senior, professional teaching staff reporting to a manager who, in turn, reported directly to the Director via a management forum. The two Assistant Directors do not have direct line management responsibility but rather co-ordinate the two main functional specialities, that is, teaching and administration.

Organisational governance was also in a state of flux awaiting state legislation on independent TAFE boards. Meanwhile they have advisory councils and administrative committees to do some of the work of a board of directors.

The challenges: 'Management here … want to perform well'

The entrance to the main reception of the main campus of Four Seasons TAFE is also the entrance to the employment services centre for students. The commercial ambience of the approach is balanced with an aesthetic emphasis. Various paintings and pieces were on display in the foyer, including some finely crafted fabric designs, exemplifying a commitment to excellence in applied arts and crafts. As the Executive Director explained:

> People come and see a facility like this and assume that you have very good facilities, and most of our facilities are. They assume that because you have good facilities, you are well resourced, and don't recognise the need for that recurrent funding to maintain those facilities—a million dollars for capital equipment.

While this comment was pertinent, and directed at the newer, larger campus of Four Seasons, one other campus has also undergone recent major capital improvements, and the outward impression of the four sites is one of sustained development. The underlying tension of the need for recurrent funding to maintain such facilities emerges again in the section on team structure and common culture.

In a frank and forthright account, the Executive Director spoke about the challenges of managing and leading a small institution in the current competitive climate in this way:

> I used to think that we were on the border of viability and certainly in relation to our purchase agreement we are on the edge. But as far as the culture is concerned, it is a good size because I know by name most of the staff. We consciously work on cross-team work, we have academic forums, we have administration networks where admin. staff from across the teams come together to look at issues and solutions.

This view 'from the top', especially as it relates to the focus on information technology, was not without its detractors as a comment by the frontline manager indicates:

> We have staff who have been here for twenty years and have been right through the trauma of the amalgamation. Anything that has to do with IT and flexible delivery, online delivery, anything with an 'e' in it is automatically [agreed to as] … that's what we will fund and support as part of innovation. There are a lot of things that happen in other programs, a different way [of doing things] than flexible delivery, that aren't on-line but provide more options for students. [These things] are not recognised in the same way.

The frontline manager was sceptical about organisations that 'believe in e-everything'.

A more positive note on the culture, and leadership in particular, was expressed by a more junior staff member:

> I see the management here as being open and encouraging. They have a real desire to want to perform well. They are prepared to put themselves and the institute up for testing against others. They are always very keen to go into national and state awards. That signifies to me a level of confidence that they have in all the staff who are working through them and in the direction of the institute.

The competitive training marketplace: 'We need to be better business managers'

The frontline manager noted that the focus at Four Seasons was 'very much business development and budget and purchase agreements'. The Executive Director supported this view:

> We have a strong focus on revenue generation. About 60% of our revenue comes from the state and the rest is either student fees or fee-for-service work or contestable funding through User Choice.
>
> I said to the staff here we have a choice, we can either have a smaller cake and accept the budget cuts, or we can get out and generate other income so that our cake gets bigger but the state slice is smaller. The staff have responded to that challenge so we have had a significant increase in the revenue generated.

The context for this focus was explained, thus:

> There is also the expectation of VET generating more income, becoming more commercial-oriented, which we are. … We have not got the profile that schools or universities have got.
>
> There is a strong focus on User Choice, which is a national imperative, which conflicts with our prime student group. Eighty percent of our students aren't in User Choice, they are not apprentices and trainees. So how do you manage that tension between a national policy and a reality of a student body and an industry you are having to serve?

A senior manager identified a number of issues to be dealt with in regard to management in a changing environment, including: 'As we are being pushed more and more to develop our own cash flows, we need to be better business managers'. One response to this need is to appoint people with specific skills.

Team structure, common culture: 'We have management meetings across teams, using themes'

The management of Four Seasons TAFE were well aware that internal competition can cause dysfunction and are now attempting to replace this competition by collaboration. They are seeking synergies between different campuses and units—moving them towards broader networks of activity within the institute as a whole. According to the Executive Director, the self-managed team concept needs to be revised. She has made it her mission to bind the many disparate teams within

Four Seasons TAFE to the whole organisation—a difficult task given existing loyalties at, and to, different campuses. She is now satisfied that she has got managers and team leaders to release commercially earned external funds to the institute for the corporate or common good. She also encourages innovation and sharing of ideas and cross team projects:

> We have been trying to break that [the self-managed team concept] down and have managers and staff recognise that their primary loyalty and responsibility is to the institute. That may mean that sometimes what they want to do as a team doesn't fit the direction. And that has been a really significant change, right down to budget level, the budget decisions, identifying that we do need initiative funding that we can take across teams and all the money should not be retained in teams. A small proportion of that needs to go to corporate, it shouldn't all be retained by the teams.

An energetic leader of the process of cultural change, the Executive Director mobilises this change through 'cross-team forums':

> We have management meetings across teams using themes like 'onions and roses' days (days in which the best and the worst of the programs are discussed) and the 'hump day' (a day in which across campus activities take place and information is shared).

With strong executive leadership, a new management system is evolving where themes and priorities across diverse and dispersed organisational units are shared and a consistent message about the organisation as a whole is given.

The Executive Director was satisfied with the current culture of Four Seasons. She was also generous in her acknowledgement of aspects of its existence, prior to her appointment. It is also noteworthy that the comments on culture were in fact from her response to the question: 'Do you have any questions you want to go back to?' In asking about how much of the current organisational culture had been influenced by initiatives in the past, she replied:

> I inherited them. They were part of the system here. I think the planning part has come from me. I had a strong hand there in embedding the planning and the priorities. I guess personal style comes into it as well. I place a lot of importance on relationships. I require loyalty from the management. For example, every manager gets a copy of the full budget so every manager sees how other teams are going, and everyone takes responsibility for the purchase agreement.

A staff member who has been with Four Seasons TAFE for sixteen years perceived that the current culture 'is structured better now. I think we are getting better managers because of the system we have moved into'. Another staff member was broadly in accord with this view:

> Self-managed teams … don't self-manage well. The decision to reassess the importance of self-managed teams, appears to have coincided, or been managed to occur, alongside stronger recognition of, and development of, the competent frontline manager.

Managerial roles and requirements: 'There is a much more complex range of functions'

This issue of tension between self-managed teams and the broader organisational agenda is also inherent in the changing expectations of managers, and to some extent, teaching staff, as the Executive Director explained:

> A manager has responsibilities across the institute. A lot of that day-to-day organisational work has to be done by staff in a team, not by the manager. So they [the staff] would much prefer not to do any administration and have someone else do all the timetabling, the co-ordination of student placements, etc. The reality is, that is now part of staff workload, not a manager's role. 'Just let me get on and teach, my job's just teaching' is not valid any more.

At the senior level, demand for change is ever-present. Ongoing uncertainty with respect to recurrent funding and various other pressures have meant that VET managers are involved in 'a much more complex range of functions':

> Handling that level of uncertainty in relation to how much money we are getting, coping with information systems which don't provide information, that don't mesh with each other, all of this, at a hands-on management level, is causing a lot of pressure. At the same time there is the expectation that the managers and some of their staff will be getting out there and generating income. There is a much more complex range of functions than managers had five years ago.

Interestingly, the skills required of the frontline manager are not unlike those of the executive or senior manager, especially when it comes to managing change. The frontline manager at Four Seasons has had to restructure and reposition a work unit 'so that we could survive':

> Basically, I have had to restructure the unit to make it more effective, make it more efficient, to allow for those resources to be freed up so that we could develop some learning resources. Also, given the changes that came in with the Training Packages, we lacked some expertise that we needed to be able to expand and deliver, so we have had to look at what expertise is in the unit. … We had to reposition ourselves so that we could survive.

More broadly, her role was understood to involve 'providing leadership and directing' the staff; 'making sure their energies are channeled in the right direction, that we are all pulling in the same direction'.

A senior manager perceived the role of managers in the VET sector and the nature of managerial work in terms of 'the concept of the servant leader':

> One of the things that really impressed me was the concept of the servant leader, the kind of leader who helps things to happen but gets out of the way, who definitely isn't an impediment. So lots of times you might work in ways that perhaps people don't even notice, but what you are trying to do is smooth the way, access the resources, get things happening, spot the talent, nurture people, give people opportunities, those kinds of things.

This manager has been with Four Seasons TAFE for more than 10 years (originally as a librarian/teacher) and in her current senior management role for a little over 12 months. She provided an important insight into the nature of managerial work and the passage that a TAFE teacher, who becomes a manager, must make:

> Learning to be a little less hands-on … is very hard … I think. The first time you are a manager, and you let go of your own kind of student, it is quite difficult if you have enjoyed teaching, to find yourself taking that step back and working through other people. This job is yet another step back, working through other managers.

Possibly because of his relatively senior position for many years, a staff member had very clear and succinct ideas about the skills required to perform managerial roles in TAFE:

> The huge issue at the moment is the human resource management skills, that would be number one. Conflict management skills are a huge issue and they certainly need training in that area. Conflict management skills are tied in with HR skills … being able to defuse situations and handle people and communicate is one of the biggest areas. A manager has to have a real understanding of the TAFE system, the training, the changing issues, the relationships with schools on one hand and the universities on the other, all of the rules and regulations regarding what you can and can't do in that area.

This staff member also commented on the difficulties attaching to the performance of these roles at frontline management level:

> A manager in our area, at our levels [frontline level], … has influences from on high. We get dictated to us what we will do—"There will be a 10% budget cut, you will implement Training

> Packages etc.' From underneath, you have the staff issues, the student issues, fine-focus stuff that is coming through. The manager sits in the middle, with all those issues, and tries to implement the change.

The expectations of another staff member with respect to frontline management and the skills necessary to undertake it were as follows:

> I would also be looking to a manager to facilitate what happens in the program, to help us to resolve any disputes there might be, to help identify people with particular strengths. I would see a frontline manager, our manager, as being the person who is going to assist our programming to keep it on target.

Management development: 'Every staff member has a personal professional development plan'

Four Seasons is proactive with regard to helping people into new positions as well as assisting their effective performance in their current positions:

> There is a process that we have in place, a very effective, well-established process. … Every staff member has a personal professional development plan which is done on a yearly basis. Part of that process is seeing where they [might] sit … in five years' time.
>
> (Frontline manager)

> As part of our performance management, we are identifying career paths. … We are looking at how to get to that goal. In some of the cases, it is an educational qualification but quite often it is leadership training or management training. Although they are in a teaching role now, they may be in management at some stage; [they] identify that as one of the goals.
>
> (Staff member)

The staff member above made the useful point that managers in VET need to have skills in management and leadership before they are placed in management and leadership roles, rather than acquiring them on the job:

> I would like to see future managers have the skills before they get here, rather than acquire skills while they are here; rather than moving by default from a position within the area into management, [they should have] those skills before they get in there, so they are ready to go.

He cautioned against the use of 'generic managers' in TAFE who have no working knowledge of the industries they are dealing with: 'I think that has been the death of some of our areas within TAFE, the fact that generic managers have been pulled into specific industry areas with no knowledge of those industries'.

Some units within Four Seasons TAFE, it seems, have a particularly strong focus on staff development. The frontline manager interviewed described the professional development (PD) program which is available to staff within her unit in this way:

> We have developed our own professional development program, both for technical skills and also the interpersonal skills. I have it mapped out for eighteen months for all staff, which covers a lot of those interpersonal skills areas—stress management, time management, conflict resolution. We put aside four full days a year for staff development and we are increasing that next year to 1½ days per term for professional development.

When asked the question: 'If you were in a position to improve management within the VET sector, what suggestions would you make?', she responded: 'Provide appropriate professional development. We have to develop our staff and support them. If staff feel supported, feel rewarded, you are going to get the best out of [them], whether it is through professional development or through a changed role'.

Future for Four Seasons TAFE

Further to the above suggestions, the frontline manager provided some well-defined areas for improvement at Four Seasons TAFE:

> We never seem to get the chance to get good at what we are doing, or to evaluate the process and refine it, because another change is always coming. You are always struggling to keep your head above water, in a sense. I think the interpersonal stuff should play a bigger role. It's the hardest one for managers; you have to balance the budget, do the paperwork. And that's often easier to achieve than the interpersonal stuff which is a lot more confrontational.

In regard to one of the four strategic priorities for Four Seasons TAFE, the frontline manager felt a little frustrated with the pace of change in her area:

> We see the dollars that we have available keep shrinking. The IT boom happened so quickly as well; some of my staff are brilliant with the IT, others are struggling to come to terms with it. There seems to be a big push that unless everything has IT in it, it is no good. It is finding the balance between all of that. We have to make sure that all the staff are skilled and that they have the special development to keep up with the changes that are happening.

This frustration was shared by one of her staff members who emphasised the importance of valuing staff who 'are are going every day and doing their job'. In other words, the future of Four Seasons may be shaped not only by the strategic, 'sexy' things like information technology but also the everyday efforts of staff:

> Our area was really upset when they saw the presentation for the national awards and our group didn't get a mention. There are lots of people behind these things who are going every day and doing their job and I think the unfortunate thing about this training is that they recognise the high flying and the notoriety and the 'sexy' things and pick up on those, but tend to forget the day-to-day [things] that are really being done well.

In contrast to these views, senior management was of the opinion that information technology 'can allow you to deal with more people or provide better services to people'. From a business and an educational perspective, the future of the organisation lies in expanding services and providing 'better services':

> We have some technology sceptics, industry people and educational people, people who maybe see that technology is useful in the program they are teaching but they don't necessarily see it as being a facilitator of the teaching process or the client relationship process. They have that feeling that technology is okay for managing the databases but it gets in the way of dealing with people, without realising that if you use it well, it can allow you to deal with more people or provide better services to people.

The very make-up, the diversity of staff at Four Seasons TAFE means an inevitable tension is likely to remain for a considerable time to come. It is quite likely that staff in different para-professional areas and more traditional trades areas, as well as emerging vocational sectors or sub-sectors (for example, digital media design), will start to request their particular style of managers and management structure. Four Seasons TAFE at the moment however, appears to be doing, more so than most, very well in terms of managing through various organisation levels. The strength of individual managers at various levels appears to be its strength, and the greatest threat to the organisation is not developments like flexible learning and information technology, but the external, political environment where the goal posts are being moved with such regularity (as one staffer claimed) that it is difficult to believe at times, that they are actually there for a reference.

Great Southern Group Training Company

Great Southern Group Training Company is situated on a busy main road in a large capital city. Employing a significant number of apprentices and trainees, it is responsible for the implementation of their training contracts and the administration of their training programs. New apprentices are placed in various different industries—'just about 30 industries I think at the moment'. The staff at Great Southern supports them through contact visits in accordance with the company's core group training role. Specifically, they identify, select, induct and place apprentices and trainees with host employers and arrange for their formal training. However, these are only the most visible aspects of their management work as we shall soon see.

Like many group schemes, Great Southern began as a community-based organisation. Some of its founding members were councillors, while others came from industry. Currently, it has 'a totally reconstituted Board' including Directors who are Council representatives. While a not-for-profit organisation, Great Southern generates a small but essential surplus. Among other things, this is used to support training activities and provide for a better quality of training experience.

The new operating environment: 'It's more business orientated'

The Chief Executive Officer and his staff occupy offices that open off a reception centre overlooking the busy main road. With its own parking facility opposite, Great Southern encourages contact with local employers and enquiries from the general public. All told, it functions as an information centre for details on career pathways and facts about new apprenticeships. Prospective apprentices and their parents come and go with different enquiries. Those already in employment might be found in one of the training rooms at the rear of the building or in the staffroom with other staff. In all likelihood however, they are on site with their host employers or at a TAFE undertaking training.

The operating environment of companies such as Great Southern has changed enormously over the last twenty years. A senior manager explains this change in this way:

> Our industry has become more and more industry focussed, because once upon a time we would be dealing with organisations who had a commitment to training, could see the benefits of skilled workforces, could see the benefits of supporting young people into training positions, who had community interests at heart. Those days aren't here any more—even though those people still exist out there, it's more business orientated and 'What can you provide us with that's going to benefit our organisation as a whole?'

Ten years ago, Great Southern was 'like a family business, very relaxed', with not a lot of pressure to produce or perform. Now, like most other organisations, it faces the challenges of financial constraints including the implementation of funding and performance systems which tend to drive everyday work. As one of the field officers states, 'there has been a dramatic change around':

> When I joined Great Southern … there wasn't a lot of pressure, the apprentices we had were good kids. If I did one unplanned visit to address an issue a week, I used to go home and think, 'Gee, I had a bad week'. There weren't the funding constraints, there wasn't the internal pressure to perform even. It was a nice job to come to. These days, we have the financial constraints, funding is linked to performance, the performance of us as operators in the organisation is linked to performance, we have our targets to meet. We are dealing with less qualified and suitable applicants, a shrinking pool of good kids, we have more rigorous auditing demands from the State Training Board, we have more documentation. Even the training arrangements are more complex.

The new competitive environment means that individual apprentices and trainees need continuing support and organisations need to continually recreate themselves to give this support. The staff member above offered the useful idea of market diversification as the way forward for an organisation which seeks to meet contemporary needs:

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> We are fine tuning, we are trying to cope with it, but from what I can see we are doing more of the same. … I'll give you an example. When we have a marketing review of the organisation, it is more of the same. When we do our corporate budget, and we look at the figures for the financial year, the same questions come up—how many Fitters and Turners are you going to put on this year? How many Electrical Mechanics are you going to put on this year? How many Cabinet Makers are you going to put on this year? They're a shrinking market. I often mention, let's look at our marketing mix. What about hospitality? Or, say, we've got all these universities in our region—what sort of traineeships would interest universities? Or the hospitals? To management's credit, the organisation's credit, last year we did diversify a little bit and got into nursing in nursing homes and aged care.

New markets are not necessarily easy to grow however: 'it takes considerable time and effort to get into another new sector of the market'.

> So if we said we were going to look at hairdressing, for example, or beauticians, or nail technicians, that sort of stuff—it takes a lot of time to promote it, it takes a lot of time to set us up as an organisation to cater for that, and there is the knowledge thing about that particular industry that you know nothing about.

Changing the marketing mix and creating new markets means new roles and responsibilities for the staff and a new range of knowledge and skills. Not only are there new clients to consider but existing clients are also presenting with new demands. A staffer, whose role is placement and recruitment, comments on the changing character of her role in this way:

> The young people that I work with have changed. I still try and find jobs, that's still the aim of my job, but the young people have a lot more issues in their lives now, compared to what they used to have 11 or 12 years ago, so we do a lot more counselling.

New roles, new responsibilities: 'We have our targets to meet'

The roles and responsibilities of frontline managers have been particularly affected by the new operating environment. Once responsible for pastoral care and looking after the apprentices and trainees, these managers are now encouraged to take on a 'dual role':

> [The CEO] was keen on having field staff that were training consultants, which meant that they did everything. … [He] wanted people who would do the training role and the recruitment placement role. A lot of the other group schemes operate in that way; they have people who do everything. Some group schemes even do the Work Cover and payroll, so if you have 60 kids you do everything from Work Cover claim, pay them, visit them, enrol them in TAFE, the whole lot. [Case] manage them.

A staffer who successfully combines these roles speaks about his everyday activity in this way:

> It is a management role—it's a human resource management role because that's really what you are doing, you're managing people, you're going through the recruitment process with people, dealing with industrial relations issues, occupational health and safety issues and you're also looking after the pastoral care of the apprentices and you're doing appraisals and feedback on performance, and those types of things.

Another staffer, who is also a frontline manager, speaks about the changes to the apprenticeship training system and his role within this system thus:

> My role has changed significantly from the person who used to go out and visit the kids on site to see how they are going, more or less, to more managing the training of the apprentices and trainees. There is a lot more negotiation these days with RTOs, development of training programs, selection of competencies, signing of a lot more documentation, a lot more reporting to the State Training Board, so that has taken over from the pastoral care, mentoring, making sure the kids are okay sort of situation.

The field staff value the opportunity to mentor apprentices when on work placements: pastoral care is a rewarding part of their work role. Indeed, for one of the Training and Development Officers, mentoring is 'one of the main attractions for me working here'.

Unfortunately, the impetus to provide pastoral care for students now sits somewhat uncomfortably with the 'emphasis on getting the students or the trainees in'. There is less time available for going out and visiting 'the kids on site to see how they are going' due, in part, to their new needs. Apparently, the quality of candidates for apprenticeships is in decline. More staff time is now given to '*managing* the training of the apprentices and trainees'.

Both frontline and senior managers are caught up in extended management roles. On the one hand, the chief executive officer must act as a 'ground manager', on the other, he needs to be 'the sort of manager who is attuned to market trends, to business opportunities'.

> What we need is a person, or a management style, or a competency if you like, that is outside the organisation, who can look for the new markets, can do that planning

What skills? 'These days I don't think you manage people'

In a full and frank account, the chief executive officer speaks to the skills he uses everyday in his managerial role in these terms:

> The skills that I think I use are not necessarily the skills that help me do the job. I don't know. I think I'm a nice enough person for people to like and respect. I know I have a commitment to the business and I know I'm not soft-hearted when it comes to some of the warm and fuzzy stuff that we're involved in. I can be quite hard-nosed with my staff. When I say, 'I'm sorry, you've gone far enough in helping that person, you can't hold their hand for the rest of their life', or, 'We don't get funding to do what you're doing, I know you feel for this person, you work with them, but when they don't do what they have to do, we have to be able to step back'. So that part of it comes up occasionally. I use good general knowledge, and I think a reasonable understanding of business and the financial side of things. I'm not always right on the IR but I'm pretty good on the IR [industrial relations] side as well, and that comes from working in the industrial sector. I probably don't pay enough attention to the human resource type area. We can't afford to have a human resource person, so by default you become the HR person as well.

The frontline manager has a somewhat similar, but at the same time different, view:

> I think you need good negotiation skills, conflict resolution skills, leadership skills. I believe that I've got good people skills, which assist me in my role and it's probably one area I see that a good manager needs to have, because these days I don't think you manage people, I think you facilitate them rather than the manage side of it.
>
> A good leader would need to have good analysing skills—there's a lot of information that comes through regarding funding or new opportunities in industry and if you don't analyse it and make the right decision you could miss out on opportunities. … You need motivational skills because there are at times that people aren't performing and you have got to get across to them why they need to perform and try to motivate them to get up in the morning and to perform.

Organisationally, occupational health and safety (OH&S) has emerged as a significant management theme. Attention is being given within Great Southern to developing management systems and formulating policies and procedures, particularly in relation to governance issues. Formal systems, policies and procedures lend themselves to auditing and accountability activity as this staffer well understands:

> With the OH&S, while safety has always been an important topic, there has been a lot more emphasis [lately] on safety, accountability particularly in labour hire, which is a term I don't like to use, being a Group Training Company. For some people we are seen as labour hire,

> which I suppose we are. I know there has been a lot of auditing of labour hire companies, a lot of accountability about on-placing to host organisations, and we have always been proactive in OH&S. What we have always lacked is a documented OH&S management system and, of course, what comes with a documented system is opportunity for review, opportunity for auditing and it is a lot easier to be accountable.

Management and staff need to be policy-alert and audit-aware. While giving increasing attention to these administrative or 'paper practices', individuals continue to experience job satisfaction. The work they are engaged has purpose and meaning: 'We're here to offer employment opportunities'. Moreover, for some staff what might be called the new tactics of transparency can be used as measures of, not only organisational, but also professional and personal, success:

> It suits me because I can actually help people, … I am also the sort of person who needs to see how successful I am quickly; I don't like to wait till the end of the year to see if I've been successful or not, so this way I can measure my success every week if I can get two or three young people jobs.

Performance management, people management: 'It is unfortunately a bit of a numbers game'

Running throughout all interviews is a tension between providing a quality client service (where quality means 'doing the mentoring') and attracting enough clients such that the organisation can meet its targets. Funding is linked to performance, and individuals are measured against their progress towards meeting central targets: 'The last three years we have been told by management and by the Board that our target will be "this"'.

Where should the field staff place their best efforts? Organisational rewards lie in meeting targets; personal and professional satisfaction resides in helping young people who 'have a lot more issues in their lives now'.

> Obviously, our finances are attuned to performance, like all organisations these days, and there is a lot of accountability. So we are having to do more with less. Our budget figure is [x number] apprentices and trainees at the end of this financial year, and the pressure is on to put people on. From my perspective as Field Officer, the pressure is on to keep these people; not only to keep the people to meet the [target figure] but also to address the sort of issues that the young people bring to our organisation. It was unheard of in 1992 to have kids with substance abuse; now it's a regular occurrence. Not only that, but in trafficking, which you didn't have to deal with in 1992.

The seeming contradiction between 'quality' and 'quantity' is quite sharp when it comes to so-called problem children. Another field officer frames her experience as a tension between 'mak[ing] a difference to people's lives' and playing a 'numbers game':

> When I first came here, there was a lot more ready dollars available for helping young people who weren't job-ready, so that we could run programs to get those people up to speed—people who were homeless, people who had no qualifications, people who were depressed, for whatever reason [people who were] long-term unemployed. We were running a lot of programs way back then and a lot of them were focused on self-esteem, confidence-building, setting goals, all of those sorts of things, and they were fantastic. I actually really felt that we could make a difference to people's lives. Now, I think it is unfortunately a bit of a numbers game, that we don't have those dollars available, and so employers are always looking for the best candidate and they don't want 'problem children'. The schools don't want them, employers don't want them, there is no funding to get them the help that they need and they are falling through the cracks.

Needless to say, staffers are aware that if the company is 'not financially viable then we can't help anybody'. An interesting interdependency exists between building the business by attracting more clients and giving these clients the time they require:

> I'm a realist as well. I know that if we're not financially viable then we can't help anybody. There are times, maybe 10% of the time, when I know that I did help someone who has a disadvantage or a disability. I can't work every day with my heart on my sleeve because then I wouldn't achieve and I have to achieve because there are targets put on me and the Company relies on a certain amount of income. I am responsible for contributing to generating that income.
>
> We don't have anywhere to go to discuss the counselling that we have given to young people and management's idea is that, if it's been that difficult a counselling session then we shouldn't be counselling, we should be referring them on. However, referring them on is not an easy thing because it can take 6 or 7 weeks for them to get the help and you can't just send someone out the front door who is depressed… say[ing] to them, 'Please don't tell us, it is too hard for us to handle and we would prefer you to be referred on'. That's rejection and young people are not going to be given confidence to come back.

Managing to lead: 'We have leaders at a variety of levels'

Turning now directly to management and leadership within contemporary organisations, I asked what makes for a good organisational manager and leader. Various opinions were expressed by different interviewees, some of which took the dynamic of gender into account:

> I think someone who can manage individuals and not treat everybody the same, who can trust that his staff are there doing the right thing by the company. I think it's very hard for men, particularly—this is a very sexist comment but—I think that men generally do not trust women managers. I think that they want to do it all but they keep information to themselves because they think that is power.

Frontline managers expressed the view that for senior management to show leadership, they needed to 'delegate work and responsibilities'. Staff, most particularly frontline managerial staff, require 'autonomy, within boundaries' in order to take initiatives and trial ideas:

> I think people enjoy that, especially once you get to that frontline management, you get there, you then want to be able to bring your own ideas and trial your own things without fear of getting a kick up the backside if something goes wrong.

Senior managers 'should be there to support and facilitate and try to remove barriers from staff [when] doing their job'.

From a senior management perspective, leadership is understood to exist at a number of levels rather than in one or a few senior people:

> Within our organisation we have leaders at a variety of levels. I don't believe the only leader is the Chief Executive Officer.

The chief executive officer of Great Southern claimed that he 'can't see too far down the track': 'sometimes I'm probably not seen to have the vision that I should have'. Despite these seeming shortcomings, a very clear view of management and leadership within the vocational education and training sector, was expressed. Management emerged as a sub-set of leadership:

> You can't go anywhere without the people wanting to come with you. I guess it's leadership. You've got to be able to have the support of the people through their recognition of what you've achieved or what you're about. They [employers] won't try [us] out or follow us, if they don't believe group training is good. You've got to have what people want, they've got to believe in it and from there all you need is the supporting skills to run the business appropriately.
>
> I would like to see us recognised as being supportive, thorough, effective and well placed to assist people in finding careers based on vocational education and training.

> One of our roles, once again it isn't funded, if you like, in that sense, is to support the various [school] teachers who in some cases know absolutely nothing about VET except what they read. They've got to explain to a young person what skills they might require or where a career pathway leads to, what work they will do in the workplace.

From a frontline management perspective, field officers act as 'as a role model which is leadership':

> You need to be seen by the apprentices as a role model which is leadership, because if you don't then they will mimic your behaviour and that might eventuate in them being returned. So you have to set a good standard, but at the same time, I like to build up a good rapport with my apprentices and trainees as well. I don't want them seeing me as a 'stick in the mud' and inflexible.

Learning to lead: 'Tak[ing] on the challenges of change'

The frontline manager made a persuasive case for the kind of management and leadership development that would assist him in preparing for his management and leadership roles:

> I know there's a Frontline Management kit that is available which is on the job, mentoring, and I think the mentoring system is a good one and a 'buddy' system, but you need the managers that are doing that training to have the underpinning knowledge. It's like competency-based training. The old system was you need to know what to do, doesn't matter if you can do, so long as you know what to do. The competency-based training system is more about what you can do rather than what you know and what you need is a system that fits into the middle of that and that could be by a combination of both work and the off the job training or theory side of it.

In his view, the best preparation involves identifying 'good role models to mentor the managers'.

Senior management emphasised the importance of staff 'tak[ing] on the challenges of change':

> So, we need to have a complement of staff that are flexible enough to take on the challenges of change, but also ensure that they have the professional development skills to implement those changes.

Everyone within the organisation is engaged in professional development of one kind or another in order to learn and create opportunities for learning and development within the company. Thus, the chief executive officer 'look[s] for … exposure to what's happening in business and in industry … maximis[ing] the opportunities whenever they appear, to learn something'.

Recently, staff met as a working group to address particular issues within the organisation and create conditions for its continuous improvement:

> We developed a team of staff … to go on a 'way forward group'. … We discussed and thrashed out what the issues were and actually came up with a goal for the company and objectives. That finished a couple of months ago … There were issues within the organisation, they needed to be addressed and a consultant came in to address those issues.

Valuing (leadership in) VET: 'Group training is good'

Not unlike other VET organisations, group training companies are under financial constraint. Government funding 'has been cut back in a number of areas' threatening their continued growth:

> Well, issues that GTCs [group training companies] are facing are more to do with funding and the levels of funding. When Group Training started 20 years ago they were supported fairly well by Government in regards to setting them up, having funds available for them to then grow in apprenticeship numbers because traineeships weren't about then. Probably over the last 5 years, funding has been cut back in a number of areas for GTCs—one of them being the completion payment for an apprenticeship or traineeship which is $1500 and I believe

> that has had a fairly major impact on GTCs in that they have then had to cover those costs by putting up the cost of their services to host employers.

Despite funding cuts, Great Southern has continued to grow and consolidate its financial position: 'The company is sitting very well financially at the moment and that's a nice space to be in'.

A range of factors appears to be at work, some structural and others cultural. Group training companies provide host employers with the 'flexibility of having an apprentice being able to rotate throughout one company to another'.

In addition, these employers 'don't like to do all of [the] paperwork [have] payroll type issues'. Industry and employers 'keep using us because, I believe, of the service and the flexibility' (Frontline manager).

The chief executive officer enlarges upon this theme. '[Employers] won't try [us] out or follow us, if they don't believe group training is good'. Building this belief involves creating a culture of commitment to training that industry and employers will willingly share. Leading cultural change is no easy matter in today's troubled times:

> As we've grown and as society has grown and changed our staff are faced more and more with social issues that our apprentices and trainees have and it's a huge area. I've had a large organisation ring me and say, 'Come and get this apprentice off our premises, he's on drugs'.

The clients of group schemes are frequently those 'who have slipped behind or need a different environment to work in'. Pastoral care is central to servicing these clients. As the chief executive officer comments:

> Where people have learning difficulties, TAFE is not always the best place to bring them back on track, so how do you set up a facility which can deliver any of the vocational training required for people who have slipped behind or need a different environment to work in?
>
> We probably, in group training, … see ourselves as leaders, yet we're not delivering the training. We see ourselves as providing the lighthouse, if you like, to people who are not destined for academic grandeur. Unfortunately, we're still dealing with that issue of having an apprenticeship or traineeship is what you do if you can't go to university, and it has this sort of second-rate connotation, yet we have proved time and time again that young people who go that way do well.

There is a strong sense of providing openings for young people and offering them a second chance. Most strongly felt of all is the idea that group schemes 'provide the lighthouse', show the way for those who are seeking vocational careers, some of whom are 'falling through the cracks'. Traditionally, this was the role of technical schools and TAFEs. Today, it seems, TAFEs do not have the flexibility to provide for this type of client:

> TAFE just seems to be unable to shift itself out of the old mould. They're still seen as: 'You'll take what we give you, that's what we offer and we're good at, and don't complain about it'.

To conclude, we may ask how valued management and leadership, or, more broadly, good governance, might be sustained at Great Southern.

In the uncertain and ever-changing world of VET, contingency management and change leadership are in high demand. Companies like Great Southern face fresh demands 'every other week': 'Industry governs us, schools govern us, government governs us'. Good governance is a matter of staying relevant to new conditions, by being 'more business orientated', while honouring old traditions such as the social betterment of 'people who have slipped behind'. Given that all staff perform management and leadership roles, it helps to have the 'right' staff in place:

> We only deliver core group training functions and financially we are very well placed in the GT [group training] community. … Our [standing] in GT core business is due to the service that

> we provide and also the staffing complement that we have. We have a team of long-term employees. We have a small team of new staff and they all have a range of skills.

Collectively, these staff have built a culture that is 'not frightened of challenges':

> We're facing change every other week. ... The culture of this organisation is probably meeting the challenges and being flexible in meeting change.

The prospects of Great Southern continuing to meet economic and educational challenges are good. Management and leadership of a sustain .ble kind are the product of collective work. One can predict that given the current interest in this work and the skilful management of the tension between continuing to attract apprentices and continuing to care about the kind of issues they bring, the company will achieve its ambition of becoming 'the Taj Mahal of VET for the area that we service'.

Metropolitan TAFE

Metropolitan TAFE provides a wide range of industry training and community education programs. It is a fairly recent entity in its present form, created from the merger of two quite diverse organisations. The amalgamation was sought by neither party, and the forced partnership generated various animosities and problems that have not yet been fully resolved. The formidable challenge faced by the organisation has been to develop a sense of cohesion and common identity from this coming together of institutes with quite distinct cultures and histories.

The newer of the two institutions, located in various localities on the outskirts of the metropolitan area, was established two decades ago with a community college philosophy which placed a strong emphasis on community access to vocational education and training, and meeting industry needs. The second was a well-established former technological college that had functioned for some years as a semi-autonomous division within a university. The older institution did not necessarily attract students who viewed TAFE study as an end in itself: it had a more academic focus than its new partner, attracted a greater number of international students, and one of its particular objectives was to create pathways for students to proceed to higher education. The different approaches as to how a TAFE institute should operate, and the different relationships developed with the communities they served, are generally referred to by staff as the 'two cultures'.

The TAFE and the university: 'We pay more and we get less'

As well as the two cultures within the amalgamated organisation, Metropolitan TAFE has to contend with the differing cultures of TAFE and higher education. The TAFE institute is considered to be both constrained and aided by its relationship with the university. In a positive sense, it has been included in the strategic initiatives developed by the dual organisation, benefits from access to many of the university's resources, and has an opportunity to be involved with 'meaningful research'. But the association also has created some tensions, as a senior executive observed:

> Multi-sector organisations are difficult because you're working in two different cultures. So there's a culture associated with running a TAFE institute, which is more entrepreneurial than a university, which is more associated with research and academic teaching. So there are cultural differences between how we work and the expectation we have of our staff and the way we relate to industry, and the way we relate to the community. ... We're still much more focussed on good teaching than universities are because essentially that's not what they do. It's a secondary component of the culture.

He also expressed concerns about Metropolitan TAFE no longer having autonomy over its budget. As part of a multi-sector institution, the TAFE division is required to contribute to university-controlled, shared corporate services, and as the amount forwarded to the university is calculated as a proportion of income, the more successful the division is in meeting targets and generating

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income, the more it has to pay. Consequently, the funds spent on corporate management are significantly greater than if it were a stand-alone organisation, and there are fewer funds available for items such as professional development and innovation:

> So the organisation's been successful but we can't reward the organisation for its success because the university's siphoning off a fair amount of the surpluses we would make if we were just purely stand-alone … My latest concern is sustaining the energy and morale of the organisation in an environment where we don't get rewarded for effort. We can tell people they are terrific, they've achieved this and done that, and then every year we have to tell them we're in budget deficit.

The intersectorial aspect was viewed ambivalently by various members of the TAFE staff. Although most wanted to maintain a distinction between the two institutions, there was also a sense that they were perhaps too isolated from one another and that the TAFE institution, located at the bottom of the hill, was looked down upon by the university staff both in a real and in a figurative sense. As a general staff member observed, 'it's a bit them and us'. But a teacher suggested that the association had positive aspects and had probably made the TAFE institute more academically rigorous:

> The fact that we are a multi-sector or an inter-sectorial institution means that [we]—I was going to say 'lift our game a bit'. I think there is less opportunity for us to fudge qualifications and things. So I think we're fortunate in that respect and I think that makes—and I can only really talk about this department and this campus that I'm sitting in—makes us very sought after.

A climate of change: 'It's been an interesting challenge to merge the organisation'

The amalgamation was the most significant change experienced by Metropolitan TAFE during the past few years, although other changes such as an increased emphasis on competition, the introduction of training packages, and budgetary restraints, have also impacted upon its operations. With the merger, not only were two divergent cultures brought together, but the doubling in size of the organisation and its geographical spread, have created major operational 'challenges'. The state of flux has been compounded by the fact that the position of Director has been held by three different persons during the past few years.

After the merger, a new organisational framework was introduced whereby functional groups operating in a matrix structure across the academic schools were created to help co-ordinate and guide the various activities within the division. Senior executives now have broad portfolios and work with teams of managers who are generally located at different campuses. The institute is guided by a 'very lean management team', as the number of senior management positions has decreased since the amalgamation, due primarily to non-replacement of staff as a result of budget constraints. Managers and senior managers now have more complex responsibilities as a result of an increase in staff, and an increase in the number of campuses. As the executive manager observed:

> I think it's fairly demanding. If you looked at senior executives in the TAFE division, we do work fairly long hours. The travel to the campuses and the university requirements add to the dimension of the job, making it more complex. There are fairly broad portfolios now in what we are trying to achieve and we're doing that with fewer resources than we may have done in the past.

Despite all the difficulties, at the operational level, there is a belief, at least at the senior management level, that the merger has been successful, and that the organisation is meeting its targets.

> I think it's been an interesting challenge to merge the organisation and I think we've done that very successfully and all the indicators that you can use support that. So, we've achieved our program profile delivery every year, grown our international business, grown our

> consultancy business, grown our tender business. We've put together a quality system where we're only the second organisation in Australia to get ISO 2000. We're right at the head of the pack.

Funding problems: 'You've got to make money above your current grants to survive'

As well as losing budget autonomy due to its relationship with the university, Metropolitan TAFE has also suffered from the competitive model that government has forced upon the institutes. The senior executive argued that the successive productivity cuts of the last ten years have driven the funding of VET down to a point where it is unsustainable.

> We're now having to really use non-government money to keep the institutes going. We can't maintain our technical infrastructures without other money. We're not funded for that. We're not funded for full professional development. We're certainly not funded for R & D type activities. So one of the issues for VET leaders now is to try and address that. It's a national issue.

Forty per cent of the institute's income now comes from non-government sources and increased emphasis has been placed on the need to generate revenue. This search for additional funding has resulted in the institute focussing on new clientele but the shift has not been embraced by all staff. A teacher commented, 'I am concerned that we seem to sometimes chase full fee-paying students or industry dollars, at the expense of those students who are coming here to consolidate their time management skills, or to just mature a bit'.

Changes in funding have also led to an increased workload because reporting requirements have increased. The professional development manager summed up the implication of this: 'Changes in funding. Changes in the degree of responsibility in terms of managing those funds and reporting.' A secretary to a departmental manager described how these requirements have impacted upon her role:

> The record keeping has become paramount and we've all become paranoid, because the teachers now have become more administrators, they have to keep their ARP [Accurate Records Process] registers up to scratch and … it's become an absolute nightmare.

Management issues: 'My departmental head probably spends half the week on the road'

The recent structural changes at Metropolitan TAFE have impacted differently upon those placed at various levels within the organisation, although all consider that their volume of work has increased. Many appear disenchanted with aspects of post-merger managerial arrangements, especially the frequent physical absence of senior managers who are now required to move constantly from campus to campus. As one of the teachers commented:

> Our managers now have to be on [various] campuses and that means we can't go to see them. So they're really managing in absentia and that just seems to me to be hopeless. It makes it really difficult if you need a decision on the spot. It can't happen. ... I think you need someone who on a day to day basis can deal with issues that come up with students ... and lots of issues do come up ... and they don't have to be screamingly important, but issues do come up and you need someone who's there who can deal with it.

The absence of managers has also impacted upon the administrative staff. According to the secretary to a departmental head: 'The head of our school—no-one ever sees her. She's not accessible at all'. And a program co-ordinator commented that he had to make a time to see his departmental manager, which was 'sometimes difficult', and that they generally operated on 'a need to know basis'.

The difficulties experienced by managers were recognised by those directing the organisation. The senior executive observed:

> Well we do a lot of travelling in the TAFE Division. I think the senior executive team and the middle management team spend a lot of time travelling. Some of our department managers have programs across [a number of] campuses. They have teams of staff at each campus. They do need to be visible to their staff. Most of them are allocated one or two days at a campus a week so that it's created a lot of management and organisational issues for us as a result of the merger and people are working much longer hours to cope with the management of their areas.

The physical absence of managers did not appear to be compensated for by other means of communication. The teacher complained:

> There's a total lack of communication. ... There's no direct communication at all. ... There's no communication via telephone really—any communication is via e-mail, and then I don't think I've had a personal e-mail from the head of school for about two years.

But there was some recognition that communication at Metropolitan TAFE needed to be improved, and emphasis was placed on the need to facilitate this within the organisation. The executive manager, when asked what particular skills were needed by senior managers in VET, responded:

> I think there's a whole lot of communication skills that are required within the organisation so that you're visible and seen to be visible. It's a professional organisation—our teaching staff and others like to have access and understand where their directors (their senior people) are coming from.
>
> There's email of course—we're accessible. ... It's one of the great joys of being a senior manager now, you can spend three hours a day on your e-mail! It's just a lovely joy really!!. ... But it's got its place and I actually think there needs to be work done on how you can use it more effectively from a management point of view and how you use the executive assistance that we have.

Good management in VET: 'They're so stretched, I don't think they can manage effectively'

The criticism about lack of accessibility to management was generally not directed at those performing managerial roles but rather at the organisational structure itself. Some sympathy was expressed for managers, for as a general staff member observed, 'These people are actually the ham in the sandwich as well. The "powers that be" sit up there and think "this is a good idea", without understanding the impracticalities of it'.

There was a perception that managers were working under pressure. The program co-ordinator commented:

> I get the impression there are lots of people running around attending meetings and doing things all the time. There is something wrong in that process. People attend meetings in the commercial world and there is an awful lot of John Cleese (Meetings Bloody Meetings), for the sake of having meetings. Lots are necessary—to advise, inform, and make decisions—but I think that there are an awful lot that are counterproductive and I sort of get the feeling in education … there is more of it that goes on. There's a problem with education. We don't have a bottom line. Therefore we have to invent other things to focus our mind on.

The teacher suggested that to achieve better management, changes needed to be made to the organisational structure:

> At a departmental level, I think they're running around like headless chooks. They're so stretched that I don't think they can manage effectively. ... We're all busy and they are certainly busy, but their roles are being undermined by being too busy—trying to spread

themselves too thinly and I don't think you can do that. It would probably be better if we had a manager here and a manager somewhere else. Split it up a bit more or something.

The program co-ordinator also believed that some change was required:

> I think you would need to change the process whereby managers in organisations like this have more time to manage, and that could mean having more people to help them to manage.

Good management and leadership in VET: 'We often confuse leaders with dictators'

There was some divergence in the views held by various members of staff at Metropolitan TAFE as to the qualities and skills required to manage and lead in VET organisations. The executive manager when asked what skills were needed to perform a senior management role in VET, responded:

> You've got to be a resilient person. You need to have a very good strategic focus. So you've got to be a strategic thinker and you've got to have planning skills. ... You've got to have the capacity to develop and run the organisation from a strategic perspective and then use that strategic framework to establish the contributions the various parts of the organisation are going to make to achieving that.

The professional development manager identified the conflict that managers experienced in trying to balance the more narrow operational aspects with the broader developments. She said that:

> There are real problems between trying to manage the operational side of things and trying to keep abreast of changes and developments in the whole VET sector and continually the operational ones pull them back from the other sorts of things that we need to be doing to progress and to make sure that we're well positioned to survive in the future.

The teacher had a far more specific requirement and said that a good VET manager would be someone, 'who recognises and acknowledges good teaching practice. That is really important and it's something that we have lost sight of.' The administrative load had grown enormously at all levels within the organisation; indeed, it had become an added burden that removed people 'from the core role of teaching'.

A good leader was generally regarded as someone who is able to guide and influence people in a positive way, and who consulted and communicated with those with whom they worked. It was, according to a teacher, 'someone who communicates well. Someone who has a vision and who can share that vision and someone that surrounds themselves with able people'.

The professional management manager described a good leader as:

> Someone who has good people skills—the ability to work with a wide range of staff and also working with staff where there are conflicts and difficulties. This happens more and more with the increasing demands on teachers to teach more hours etc. I think the people side of things is very important. However, they also need to be consistent, firm, and fair in their dealings. They should make decisions based on policy or principles rather than who's just come in the door last.

The secretary to the departmental head wanted in a leader:

> Someone who's prepared to take on new ideas and again be proactive, and that consults, and be prepared to accept that perhaps this might be better than that. And try as a leader to bring it all together, but make sure that the members of the team feel like they have had an input.

The senior executive was very positive about providing leadership for the people with whom he worked and acknowledged how important they were to achieving successful outcomes for the organisation.

> You've got to be able to work with the team of senior executives that you've got—to bring them on board. ... You've got to keep working with that group and keep them focussed on

> strategy so that you're not just driving the operational stuff. You're staying focussed on your key directions. So there's leadership in the sense of your team and developing the skills of that team so they can do that work.

There was some suggestion however, *that despite Metropolitan TAFE having a* well-articulated sense of direction shared by those at the higher levels of management, those at lower levels within the organisation were not so aware or enthusiastic about this. When asked about what was required in a VET leader, the program co-ordinator offered the following comment:

> Need to develop an understanding of the bigger picture with the troops. The troops are the majority. There's not a great understanding at the teacher level of where the organisation is going and why. This is not clearly articulated. I try to articulate it as I understand it. Maybe it's part of this constant rushing around without having time to think.

The future

Metropolitan TAFE is still attempting to come to terms with its recent merger and the new structure that has been created. As a result of the changes, particularly the increase in the number of campuses, senior and middle managers have been placed under considerable pressure. Problems relating to communication and co-ordination within schools and departments still need to be resolved, although attempts are being made to address these issues. The organisation has continued to perform well, and has been successful in achieving its targets and generating income. The biggest challenge it now faces, according to the executive manager, is:

> Sustaining the energy of the organisation and creating a climate or culture in the way we deliver quality education and learning experiences to students. The merger fractured that—there were two cultures and there was a lot of animosity.

Overland Institute of TAFE

Heady with new growth, and vibrant with blossom, the foliage around the small, single-story brick building provides a welcome. Overland Institute of TAFE overlooks the centre of its rural city, on a gentle hillside, adjacent to two large schools, and the botanical gardens. If you give time to the view, you will notice the heritage of the past—spires, avenues of trees, and residential precincts much in demand for their architectural style and close proximity to the centre of urban life. But you will also notice the retail, commercial and administrative heart of the city, bounded on one side by the busy railway station, and on the other side by the tranquil river, now contained by levee banks. The small building you are now entering is the Directorate. Beside it and sharing the view are larger buildings for the usual educational infrastructure: classrooms, library, workshops, amenities and so on. Gardens and ordered layout continue this first impression as one of accessibility and 'presence' in the city.

Managing and leading cultural change: 'We aim to surprise and delight'

The Executive Director and her Directorate staff occupy offices that open off a common space into which you enter, and are indeed made welcome. Overland has well over one dozen campuses covering about 125 000 sq km of New South Wales, and this is the heart of the operation. Around the walls are artworks from local indigenous painters—a significant part of an institute art collection, which has been explicitly developed in the last five years. In the Director's office, there are more of these paintings, and during our interview these and several other issues show that Overland is serious about connecting with this part of New South Wales, and, in doing so, also about forging a new identity. As the Director states:

> We are an organisation … that aims to surprise and delight. We're changing our culture to go for a reputation of excellence, innovation and dynamism. We're doing that because we feel that people have had various fixed ideas about TAFE and in fact everyone calls us 'the TAFE'

> or attempts to make every TAFE synonymous with every other TAFE. We're wanting to differentiate ourselves.

But what does this cultural change consist in? Another interviewee suggested that, ideally, employees at Overland:

> … must be flexible, and must readily accept change. The market is so dynamic … Therefore, people's willingness to get out there, risk manage, take the opportunity, wear the consequences if it doesn't work but plan for it to work, and not be so concerned about maintaining an even keel. The kind of person that we want is the person who is switched on, is alert and is willing to take appropriate risks at appropriate times, and move into uncharted waters.

This is perhaps a long way from traditional TAFE culture. The same person went on to affirm what he meant by employees who are ideal change agents, with a vivid analogy:

> In terms of the market focus, converting that qualification into market focus, they have to be dynamic, they have to be steadfast, they have to be resilient. My manager put it the best way the other day, in talking to some consultants; he said, 'If nine people told you the earth was flat, and two told you it was round, who would you believe?' And in this scenario, what I'm suggesting to you is that, in an organisation such as this, there are still those nine people who believe the earth is flat. And we would see ourselves as those who have seen that the earth is round.

Elsewhere at Overland, there are frontline managers who have a similar view of the need for flexible, dynamic employees:

> You ask, what do I look for in the future. I look for a person that I have to go and buy, as such, but one flexible in knowledge, flexible in all the things associated with delivery. I can't have the mindset of the past, of 9 to 5, go into a classroom do this, do that, and walk out. I have to have the individual who will come along with an open mind in regard to what we are doing, has to be student-centred, and we have to make sure that you try and put yourself in the place of the student all the time.

Turning now to leadership in this new, more dynamic culture at Overland, the same interviewee suggested, quite spontaneously, that the best leaders would have:

> … utmost integrity [and be] trustworthy to the nth degree, flexible in mind and attitudes to whatever it may be, and always thinking of the future but not forgetting the present. [They should] always think ahead but don't forget today.

Does the Director—the main leader—in her interview, emphasise this attention to strategy? I asked her about her management style:

> In terms of my management style and my management approach with people, it starts off fairly directive, then as people embrace the principles you just let go and let go and let go until they're as free as they like. That's why we've been pushing our strategic goals because if people are moving and there are key directions which are very simple, they follow the key directions and how they do it is really up to them.

What can this endorsement of self-direction mean, in a large organisation like Overland, especially when it is trying to change from a bureaucratic culture to a market-oriented culture?

New responsibilities, new roles: ' … achieved in the most effective manner'

The manager of professional development for all of Overland was very helpful in articulating new responsibilities and roles in this new culture. In the context of an institute-wide policy of career self-direction, called the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP), she discusses how the individual can be led towards more strategically significant professional practice, that is, more towards self-management:

> We are trying to drill down whose responsibility staff training and professional development are. Of course, the organisation has a responsibility to make sure its staff has the skills, but individuals also have responsibility to assist in the identification of what they think they need. Their line managers also have the responsibility of working with their staff to see what skills are required and how they can be achieved in the most effective manner.

Fair enough, but what practices are now different in this new culture, to expedite this new professional? She went on:

> An example is teacher training. In the old days, when people needed training, everyone hopped in a plane and flew to Sydney and got a week's residential, then they got in a plane and came back; or they hopped in a car and went to [another regional city]. That is something that was still very prevalent when I arrived four years ago. The cultural shift we are trying to make is that you don't have to always go somewhere to develop the skills. So [we now have] more of a workplace-based focus, using different technologies to assist.

She elaborated on what this workplace focus is like:

> We call it 'supportive independent learning'. People can identify skills that they want and we have mentors. The mentor might not be in the office but might be at [another regional city] or [yet another city], but people communicate with their mentor through e-mail and telephone, so if they get stuck working through any self-paced resources, they can use that support independently. We have found that very successful.

But even in the 'supportive' workplace, other staff need to understand that this is dedicated time, it seems:

> There is still a cultural shift that we are trying [to achieve]. If you went to a two-hour training session, someone would answer your phone and take me[illegible]ges for you; but if you were sitting at your desk, we are still having a problem with colleagues understanding that those people are using PD time and they are not 'really' there.

Moreover, there are practical realities to contend with:

> We have to go that way because of the impact on people's personal time to travel; travel is not funded. If you go to [a regional city] and do a day's work, you drive to and from [that city] in your own time. If you're doing it at your desk, you don't have to be away from your family. Also, we are utilising the technologies that we have. If we book a computer room for staff training and development, that takes it away from the students. When we have perfectly good administration computers on deck, why should people leave the computer empty to go and take a computer somewhere else? It's about using our own resources effectively and efficiently, less burdensome on people's personal time. It is no good me running a computer course in [a regional city] and everyone travelling from all over, and this is how it used to be done.

In addition, the manager of professional development for Overland was keen to emphasise that self-directed learning (via the Individual Professional Development Plan) is nonetheless located in a social context, in two ways: first that although the workforce at Overland is diverse, strategic developmental activities are inclusive; and secondly, that teamwork is a priority:

> Teachers are 'special', and 'precious', and they are the frontline of our business, but I think the divide that was here between education staff and non-education staff wasn't good business practice. Part of the IPDP is for everyone, there is not a special one for teachers and a special one for managers or anyone else. The directors don't get any special consideration, they get the same instrument as a general assistant might get. Part of that is to create a culture of: 'If we have a position, it must be important, it must be contributing; if it isn't, why have we got it?' To create a culture of teamwork, we have tried to have PD that is, where possible, administration support staff mixed with managers, educational staff. Of course, we have targeted programs when it is appropriate.

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Skills—the technical and the generic: 'Frontline managers fill critical positions'

So how important are formal, technical skills and competence in the new Overland, compared with the expressed enthusiasm for 'flexible', 'dynamic' individuals who can work in teams?

The manager of quality assurance for Overland was asked about frontline managers in this respect:

> It is absolutely true that frontline managers fill critical positions here. Apart from anything else, again both the geography and the structure of the organisation ensure that that's the way it will be. At the end of the day, the role of heads of campus, particularly in smaller locations, heads of sections, is increasingly important as far as connection with the region is concerned. ... Not too many people do business with the [Overland] because we have a 'Director of Corporate Planning and Quality Management'. That might be critically important to what happens internally, but why would someone running a rice field [in a crop production area in the region], who wants forty people trained in food processing, be as concerned about that, as opposed to the sort of service they will get out of [Overland's local campus] and the relationship between themselves and campus manager/business development personnel, and just their general experience with the organisation at the front-end?

Leadership and management at Overland, then, is perhaps best perceived less in terms of formal technical skills and competence—one's background, and current utility—and more in terms of one's potential contribution to the growth of the business, which can be identified more generically, and less formally. Let us explore this a little.

The quality assurance manager offered the useful idea of 'cascading' the vision down the organisation, amongst all who 'share a commitment to improve' (his definition of quality):

> The other thing is, those frontline managers have to be able to share that institutional vision and be able to clearly see where they actually fit into it, which, in many ways, is a reflection of how they are actually going to manage to do it. Given the diversity of [multi-] campuses and the diversity of regions, there is no 'one size fits all' that says that if you follow this formula you will be a successful frontline manager in X location. It doesn't work like that. You have to say: 'This is what institute management has decided, of which I'm a part. How do we cascade this down through my campuses, or my sections, or whatever, and maintain the alignment and generate business in so doing'.

This cascading is a function of a generic capability to 'take advantage of opportunities' and 'keep up with changes', as the interviewee here, himself a frontline manager at Overland goes on to affirm:

> [I would] establish a balance of ... let's say 70/30—70% on the generic capabilities, 30% for speciality, so specialist knowledge, community involvement, track record, those sorts of things. Most of the capabilities are eminently portable between locations, I presume even between systems. For someone who is capable of taking advantage of opportunities and is able to keep up with the changes that are occurring specifically in industry, doing a similar sort of thing in Victoria, Queensland or Western Australia, even though they are structured differently, should be a reflection on the 70% side, and the portability of that generic capability.

Generic, portable leadership and management capabilities (or skills, or competence) were frequently endorsed at Overland, because they were easily linkable by interviewees to the new 'ideal' employee.

To market, to market: 'A nice mixed view'

In the push toward markets, it seems to be helpful to have come from somewhere else (outside this region but within TAFE in New South Wales, or outside education sectors, or outside 'government'). As one staff member stated:

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> We have a director of the area who is my manager, who has come in from outside VET in Australia, working in government in Australia, and he has a lot of good ideas and he is purely commercial-focussed. But whilst there are many good values in that, it causes tension. Conversely, people who are playing the role of Principal, as distinct from Campus Director—[such] people are entrenched in views rather than melding ideas.

Apart from the Individual Professional Development Plan, some specific activities can address the 'cultural divide', as this staff member explained:

> We have recently, for instance, had a speaker come and give a staff development [session] on writing successful tender documents and grant applications. That was, I believe, very useful insofar as the person who delivered that information had an educational background and is operating as a private consultant. You got a nice, mixed view of: 'I understand the complexities of dealing with federal money, or state funds' and also how to deal with a commercial environment and write in perhaps a more succinct, straightforward way, to get the job.
>
> So stuff that moves around those arenas is very useful in terms of staff development.

Particularly interesting is that view, well put by this staffer, that Overland's 'clients' in the region are themselves taking an increasingly international perspective. So the 'locality' is less likely to be 'parochial':

> There is a sense of locale in all that we do … many regional groups, such as rice growers, wine makers etc. are not parochial any more. They can't afford to be parochial, they're looking at export markets, they're looking at national markets.

Yet even given this, there is a need to 'customise' Overland to the market, quite specifically:

> I will just put one more slant on that, and this is a problem we have in our kinds of organisations. I can have a teacher who is a very good teacher of what he does, and that subject matter might be pertinent to the client's requirements, but it does not necessarily mean I can use that teacher to put to that organisation, because they might say, 'Where is that value in terms of our industry?' You can say, you are a qualified accountant, we need accountancy training, but what is your background in the rice industry?

So the tension which is emerging here is between, on the one hand, developing strength in those with generic (and portable, and flexible) expertise in leadership, management and teaching (or training), and, on the other hand, developing strengths in industry-specific (or community-recognised) skills. Yet with a highly casualised workforce (450 staff out of about 1450 are full-time), the resolution of this tension is suggested by the growing usage of contracts, and the pursuit—ever successfully—of clients in the marketplace, via 'project'-based models of association. Contracts and projects go together, it seems, providing the real significance of the need at Overland for 'flexible, dynamic' staff. To reiterate an earlier comment from a frontline manager: 'I look for a person that I have to go and buy, as such, but one flexible in knowledge, flexible in all the things associated with delivery'.

Does this new labour market, and its leadership and management, engage with traditional educational values? In other words, how can this new culture be sustained?

Challenges in sustaining change: 'It's quite easy not to take risks'

One staffer remarked:

> I think [these changes] confront an interpretation of traditional educational values. There is some thought, from an educational perspective, that education should be almost historic as much as it is valuable, the traditional values of what education is. I don't take that view. I think that we can interpret education into situations which can be ongoing and dynamic and

> rich. Again, when you talk about a workplace training environment or a development on an educational basis, I don't see them as mutually exclusive. I think you can enrich either.

Yet the topic seems to turn on traditional industrial realities at Overland. He went on:

> ['Tradition'] is an issue for us. It is the tradition of New South Wales public service. The … New South Wales teachers' union, is a very strong and dynamic union, as it should be. It is not a risk-taking union. It is very easy for a teacher to say, when querying, that's different to what I do, so I won't do it. In an organisation as large as this, it's also quite easy to not take risks, to settle back into a niche.

In the office of the professional development manager, such realities are daily issues. She made several good points about this transition to a new Overland workforce.

First, she endorsed the new, more generic, expertise much in demand:

> TAFE traditionally has focussed on the technical skills as being the highest priority—industry currency, technical skills—but that is changing over recent years. We are looking for much more core competencies or key competencies, and also an aptitude for computer and information technology and communication, even if people have not had the opportunity to develop that but realise that it is now part of the changing role of the teacher and changing role of anyone working.

Second, flatter, more participative leadership is emerging in a structural sense:

> We have an opportunity through our recruitment and selection process, part of PD. We create expressions of interest on an annual basis for staff to apply to do another person's job. We have a joint executive which identifies the twenty-five management-type jobs and we develop a suitability list, people are interviewed to help with the matching, and then when someone takes leave, there is job rotation available.

Third, in addition to institutional strengths, individual career pathways and ambitions can be identified:

> We have it in a formal process. So, that way, managers might identify people they think are suitable, but we might not know everyone who has ambition to be in a higher position, so that gives people the opportunity to put their hands up and come to the attention of senior management. It also helps with succession planning because you also identify which people are interested in moving up the career path. It also gives help to people's career planning.

The Director of Overland used the phrase 'discovering ambition', and she meant it in both these ways, which is that the institute discovers who is around and also the people find within themselves that they can put their hands up and then grow. The personal development manager agreed, adding:

> I think in an organisation like [Overland], management and leadership is a difficult topic to handle in terms of competency in current jobs. It is a very hierarchical organisation, even though we have moved to a flatter structure. To PD especially it is an additional challenge to help people to grow as individuals in their current jobs, without the expectation that those skills will be used in a higher job.

The new casualised labour market comes up for management again, in the light of flatter, team-based work, which is also increasingly contract- or project-driven. For the staffing profile and its development at Overland, the question, for the personal development manager, is then:

> You have to look at your business [at Overland] and work out what you are going to reskill and redevelop and what you are going to buy in. The decision to maintain a high casual workforce is part of buying in those skills to service those particular customers, and that is what we can do. We can identify people who have not only the industry knowledge but also the ability to build relationships and network, because those skills now are becoming a very high demand.

Clearly, the leadership of change is becoming part of each worker's expertise, which raises interesting issues for the management of staff at Overland, as we now explore.

Leading change: 'Leadership does not rest with the manager'

This is not merely a matter of strategic planning. She went on:

> It is more than planning, it is strategic thinking and strategic action. Bureaucracies are very good at strategic planning but they are not very good at strategic thinking sometimes and strategic action. That is part of the leadership skills that we really need and we are trying to develop in [this region], strategic thinking and strategic action. Industry now wants people who have leadership and project management skills.

And leadership is meant to be a dispersed capability, as we noted in earlier remarks from others at Overland:

> … one thing that has changed [here], and it has to change even more, is that idea of leadership does not rest with the manager. Because we are so dispersed and because we are relying on a casualised workforce more and more, leadership can be from the part-time teacher at [a regional city], who has responsibility for working with the water management people, or for the rice growers—because the manager may not have expertise in that area. The manager might be able to show leadership by loosening the reigns. To let a person with that expertise do his job.

And to return to the main cultural and legislative framework for Overland, the personal development manager concludes that only some people have this potential for leadership:

> In a public service environment where we have public accountability, we need that ability to create a culture of risk management and risk assessment when you are trying to operate in a business model but with the constraints of the public service. It is getting a good balance between being able to have leadership strategies that include strategic thinking, move it all forward, bring people of a certain kind with you. The notion that they were good teachers, now they are managers, does not mean they are good managers.
>
> … to me, the New South Wales system is very old-fashioned, in the language. We can massage it as much as we can, but we are stuck with a lot of those things based on the statewide industrial relations environment. A head teacher is really a frontline manager, they have the ultimate responsibility for their discipline areas, their sections, the staff who are in their sections, the part-time teachers who are employed in their sections, and the learners.
>
> [Therefore, there are some people] who we might choose not to develop because we find that we have to be more strategic and sometimes you can't teach an old horse new tricks. So we are better off using our resources and helping that section by actually developing the leadership and skills in another person within that section, rather than focussing all the leadership and management training onto the manager. We're exploring those types of things at the moment.

To conclude, we may ask how management and leadership could play out at Overland.

Clearly a cultural change is well underway, with significant emphasis on the support of self-management, right across the workforce. But this must be understood fairly specifically. It is the cultivation of a market outlook and a willingness to engage the dynamism of regional communities which will make for the well-managed person, and, this study suggests, the well-managed institute. The hard edge to this is evolution of a labour market from a traditional TAFE industrial climate to one marked by contingency. Unlike the flowers that bloom in the spring, outside the Directorate at Overland, this is not a cyclical change. Since this 'discovering ambition' has been awakened at Overland, one can predict that both organisationally and individually, the current interest in and enthusiasm for teams, and their sound leadership will be the basis of management practice in this part of the VET world.

Satellite College of TAFE

Winding past a large river and enjoying the sights of the once rural community, one stumbles across the educational hub of this small town. On the left is the town high school that sits at the bottom of a hill and not far from the river bank. Further to the right and half way up the incline is the TAFE that has serviced this community for three to four decades. Satellite College of TAFE is one in a cluster of campuses that creates the Galaxy Institute.

Satellite Campus presents as an inviting learning environment. Rolling grassy lawns and large shady trees that allow for enjoyable intervals between classes surround the area. Buildings are clearly marked with appropriate signs so that you cannot lose your way around this moderate-size campus. The staff appear relaxed and easy-going. Most of the staff live within a one-hour drive of their workplace and appreciate not having to travel with the 55 000 commuters to Sydney each day.

This community is in the lower socio-economic brackets of society and is highly populated. This once sleepy rural community has now been developed, with many new and wide-spreading housing estates and community services such as public and private schools and shopping malls, but very little opportunity for full-time employment.

The new TAFE sector: 'Get better or get out'

The clientele at Satellite are changing: 'We get kids that can't cope with the state school system and they come here'. The role of this college is to assist students in gaining competence with skills, knowledge and attitudes in order to gain employment and further personal growth. It would appear that the educational staff have the students' best interests at heart, however, the majority of the campus clientele are very young and possibly in need of more than what the campus can offer in terms of guidance. While there are student counsellors employed at the campus, many students are looking for not only workplace skills and knowledge but also guidance in other life areas.

The role of the campus manager is huge. The campus manager is in fact a cluster manager managing the physical facilities or infrastructure of two sites. Priority is given to managing these facilities, managing administrative and support staff for the two sites and liaising with educational staff to support their teaching and learning areas. Issues of student discipline can arise with younger students on campus. Thus, this manager deals with 'whatever comes up'.

The head teachers and educational staff believe strongly in public education and are tireless in their efforts. When asked 'What is it like working for TAFE' one teacher said, 'Challenging, very challenging'. The campus manager described the changes occurring in TAFE in New South Wales over the past decade in this way:

> I have been with the organisation five years and just prior to my arriving in 1996, over the past 18 months to that, they had undergone two major restructures from state level. They were put into regions and then they were transferred within a short period of time to networks, and then that only lasted for about 18 months, and then they were formed into institutes.

With continual 'changes in the structure, there has been a big push for culture change'. Driven by reductions in government spending, this change is a seeming necessity:

> A lot of people think we should still be fully government funded and we're not and if we don't change, our resources will dry up.

There appear to be two different cultures within this campus, one that promotes individualism, innovation and working with new business strategies and the other that enacts 'what TAFE owes me'. A frontline manager explained:

> TAFE has two cultures, the old culture and a new culture. There are people who are willing to accept change and go forward with it and take the positives, and a lot of the older staff are

very, not to be union bashing, but unionised from the old days; [they] have the old culture: 'what TAFE owes me'.

The new people coming through that have been in private enterprise, still are, or not so long ago, understand that if you don't make money, if you don't cut costs, if you don't work within a budget, you don't survive, whereas the older culture is: 'spend all budgets as quick as you can, put your hand out for more because you will always get it—the bucket is never ending'—and it is always someone else's responsibility to keep putting it in and it is always your responsibility to keep taking it out.

The latter sub-culture is left over from the days of TAFE being totally government-funded, where teachers taught and were not necessarily expected, or encouraged, to be involved in ongoing professional or self-development and keep up to date with changes in business or industry.

Slowly but surely this sub-culture will become one with the development of change programs and the turnover of staff in the next ten years:

It is a business culture these days. You have to survive, with all the non-government training organisations or the other RTOs, they have access to ANTA funds the same as TAFE does. It's not a closed shop anymore so it's 'get better or get out'. … If you have people you can train, can change, can make meet [work demands], but they have to want to support the work, it'll survive, but until you get [rid] … of the old 55 plusses and 50 plusses, who are still in the system, that have been in here for decades, change is a word that doesn't come up.

Moving Satellite towards 'more of a self-managed, business type approach'

Change is ongoing and presents numerous challenges. As described on several occasions while talking to staff: 'To be effective in the public education system, one needs to be a magician or a Jack of all trades'. The culture of TAFE has changed from 'being an old fashioned public sector, highly bureaucratic "I tell you what to do, you do it, type of operation", more to a teams base'. From the perspective of senior management, these changes represent 'a period of rebirth in vocational education and training':

At the moment, it is quite exciting. I find it quite exciting. I like that things are changing, things are moving more to the way I'm comfortable with operating. There is a lot happening at the moment. I think it is going to be a bit of a period of rebirth in vocational education and training. We're trying to find where we fit in the new world.

Leadership is central to the rebirth of VET. At Satellite, it is conceived as an extension of management but 'not specific to managers'. A leader is a manager, thus s/he may employ administrators to administer many aspects of a business, but is much more that that. A leader sets the goals and establishes the vision for an organisation and communicates these goals to others, motivating them to help him/her achieve objectives.

I regard leadership as being all across the organisation, not specific to managers. The biggest issue we have is people understanding why we do what we are doing and if they don't understand why we are doing what we are doing they won't support it.

(Professional development manager)

The campus manager speaks to managing and leading TAFEs today in these terms:

The organisation has moved away from the command and control [approach] to more of a self-managed, business-type approach. We are still on the way there. It's difficult, sometimes we get into a bounce. While everything is going quite nicely, we're happy to work more in that role but as soon as some amount of pressure is applied, albeit political, albeit budget, or whatever, sometimes behaviour tends to bounce back to where people are comfortable.

In moving towards 'more of a self-managed, business-type approach', various skills are required:

> A good understanding of business, very good people skills, time management, I suppose trying to stay on track, trying to look forward and not getting bogged down.
>
> (Campus manager)

'People skills' are particularly important because:

> Quite a lot of people are offside with what is happening. They refuse to participate so we have had to look at strategies to try and overcome those areas.
>
> (Professional development manager)

The 'view from above': 'How can we be more responsive?'

The campus manager and her administrative staff occupy offices that open off a common space into which you enter. Satellite has delivered many educational courses in the past. However, some of the higher-level courses have been relocated with the introduction of a newer campus within the cluster, one which has modern and more readily available resources. During our interview, the campus manager talked about cultural change, including the concerns that she has about the retiring staff population and the strategies that need to be put in place:

> At present the organisation is still in a process of fairly rapid change. It is not change itself that is putting pressure, stresses on the organisation, more the rate of change. … TAFE has not changed in something like 30 or 40 years. So we had and still have a staff that the curve has skewed very far to the right: most of our staff are about 50 and above age group and a significant amount of them are retiring and/or resigning over the next five to ten years.

In the recent past, TAFE was structured hierarchically. In the view of another senior manager, moving staff from one mode of management to another is an ongoing and tricky task:

> One of the biggest challenges that we have is the issue of the culture being a large complex public sector organisation and people are not willing to change. In terms of that, there is a lot of dead wood that needs to be sort of floated off into the distance somewhere. So I think that the responsibility is very, very difficult in terms of looking at that culture shift that we have to implement. … The difficulty with TAFE is the competitive environment that we now find ourselves in where the non-treasury funds are becoming increasingly important and it gets back to culture of the organisation.

It is envisaged that this cultural change will take eight to ten years. After all, a short time ago, Satellite was in a very controlled environment with an emphasis on policy and procedure, with the t's crossed and the i's dotted. Now, staff must unlearn the 'helplessness' and 'dependency' induced by being a member of the 'old fashioned public sector' where hierarchical models of management tended to rule:

> People, the longer they are in the hierarchy, they learn to be helpless, they learn to be dependent, then when they learn helplessness and dependency on the hierarchy, they become professional victims and then they blame the hierarchy.

Management and staff must learn to operate in cultures that are less Balkanised or fragmented than at present and adopt a teams approach:

> In an organisation like this, there are a lot of people operating in silos, particularly from Faculty to faculty, where, you know, one faculty will say, for example: 'These are my courses' and the institute says: 'No they are not your courses, they are institute courses and that is the end of the story'.
>
> Personally, I believe they need to encourage the teams approach which is, depending on the level of the team, acting as a facilitator and also as an advocate for the team, acting in cross-functional teams.

The key issue for the organisation appears to be competitiveness within the training marketplace—'the change of skills that we need in terms of remaining competitive and being responsive'. The professional development manager is of the view that funding is less of a challenge for Satellite College than building the capacity to generate income:

> What we need is a more effective tendering unit or more effective commercial unit. … Just in terms of when someone rings the institute and says: 'I want this training for my employees, can we start on Monday?' You know, in this institute, well in TAFE anyway, you chase all around for three weeks and then run into them down the service station!! So I think that's the main issue, how can we be more responsive in the competitive training environment? I don't see the issue of government funding not increasing or not retaining its value as, as much of an issue, as remaining competitive.

Emphasis is placed on proactive behaviour which, on the one hand, will generate income and build the business, and on the other, advance the cause of education. As the campus manager comments, leaders in VET are 'in the business of education. … They have to know the business of education and also have business skills'.

The 'view from below': 'Locked behind a door doing the paperwork'

It was very evident from the interviews that management responsibilities have been devolved. Faculty directors and head teachers now have a dual role. They are responsible for educational leadership and business management.

> With the devolution that has occurred where a lot of responsibility has been passed essentially from, depending on the structure of the organisation in the VET sector but certainly in a typical TAFE institution, for example here, the educational responsibility of a campus manager has probably gone over to the faculty director and all of the responsibilities as well in terms of business responsibilities, a lot of that has been devolved down to our head teachers where head teachers are now responsible for their own marketing, their own budgeting and so on, so the role of the head teacher has changed dramatically, and they're, I guess they are much more of a manager than they used be. (Professional development manager)

Frontline managers (head teachers) are under particular pressure. Not unlike campus managers who are responsible for more than one facility and one site, their workload has substantially increased. Head teachers are faced with the issue of generating revenue from courses, some of which don't, and were never intended to, pay their way:

> We get x amount of dollars to run x amount of courses and that is how we are funded and anything else we want to do, we have to generate that income from somewhere else, or make cost-cutting measures, and we have been through so many efficiency-type processes that you can't just keep slicing away so we have to look at generating more revenue. And then … the political impact comes in where the politician from x area says: 'Why have you cut this course in our community?' 'Well, we haven't got the funds'. 'You will run that course!' So something has to suffer and because of the workload of the head teachers, they have to think more in a commercial sense and offer more courses commercially so that just complicates [things].

The only way Satellite can run some its courses is if generates income from somewhere else.

In demonstrating 'a good understanding of business', time is taken from traditional responsibilities and roles. From an educational leader's point of view, it is difficult to undertake an educational leadership role because this role is being displaced by 'having to do the stuff that is urgent':

> From our main educational leaders' point of view, … they don't feel that they have enough time to devote to the educational leadership role that they are given and have to put too much into the operational budget stuff, so they are having to do the stuff that is urgent and not necessarily get into the important stuff and with the much flatter structure more pressure is put on for that to happen. (Cluster manager)

The 'view from below' (and it should be said, not far below because of the very flat structure) is really no view at all. Head teachers are customarily 'locked behind a door doing the paperwork all day':

> My title is supposed to be head teacher, which means you have a teaching component and an administrative component, well that does not work. I find these days that I can nearly not teach at all and virtually be a clerical person doing all the paperwork through the week and still not get it done. I regularly do 40–50 hours a week but there is only 30 hours pay applicable to it.

> You can't be head teacher and motivator of a section if you are locked behind a door doing the paperwork all day. So if I was out there, and I know this doesn't sound nice, but I have tried to embarrass people out there to do some work by all of a sudden seeing this head teacher in overalls out there, physically doing it, while they are watching. … I would just much rather be out there doing it, that is where the focus is, that is where the students are, that is where the teachers are and that is where the work is.

The frontline manager interviewed at Satellite expressed the view that 'a lot of TAFE management is reactive'. Ultimately, there was consistency between the views of senior and frontline managers with respect to what needs to change when managing and leading in TAFE. Managers need to somehow get the time to sit and plan, 'plan for the future' and plan for change. Change management and change leadership—'see[ing] how we can get staff involved'—emerged as organisational imperatives:

> You … need to have a head teacher with a non-teaching role so that the paperwork and things could be done on time, ahead of time, so that you then have time to sit and plan for the future, what we can change, what is changing, how we can do it, look at courses coming up, see how we can get staff involved, but it just seems to be covering your butt each day of the week.

Making managers and leaders: 'VET Managers of the Future'

The Galaxy Institute goals are to:

- ✧ provide responsive and competitive quality vocational education and training programs, products and services to meet customers' needs
- ✧ position and market the Galaxy Institute as first choice in quality vocational education and training
- ✧ develop and maintain an innovative learning organisation in which individual and team contributions are valued and maximised
- ✧ develop and promote quality leadership, management and accountability
- ✧ strengthen students' knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities.

There are many strategies that have been put in place to achieve these goals. Various programs are offered to encourage staff to participate in learning and development activities:

> Everything is on tap here that we need, so you can't really complain about that. And in general from my experience in the past, … if ever you want to attend any kind of training, if you were free, you could go. I've had disability awareness training, manual-handling training, you have everything.

There are two programs that are currently being delivered to ensure Satellite's continuing improvement process in education and the management of cultural change. The professional development manager explained what Galaxy is doing in terms of management training in this way:

> Essentially, within this organisation we've started a massive cultural change program which was actually started about three or four years ago, and the idea at the time was to use a top-down approach and try to change the culture at the top which was a fair amount of a dismal

> failure to be quite honest. So then we took on a different approach where we thought what we need in this organisation is a critical mass of people with a new way of thinking, as in a new culture. Now we recognised that this was not going to come from a leadership of 12 or 15 people so we developed a target group of 320 frontline managers and we put them into a five-day training program, intensive training program which was called VET Managers of the Future.

The VET Managers of the Future program attempts to shift frontline managers out of the role of 'professional victim', into 'the problem-solving role'. The program 'deals with pushing the boundaries, being able to challenge, it gives basic business skills, things like that'. It seeks to achieve 'a frontline manager, who is hopefully … pushing their campus manager in terms of change and innovation and empowerment' (Professional development manager).

A further program, Challenging VET Managers, was designed for the team members of the VET managers: 'The philosophy of that program was twofold: to continue the mindset shift … and to give them the skills to challenge their immediate managers'. As members of teams, staff are provided with the opportunity to 'manage up': they are encouraged to expect certain types of behaviour from their managers and to hold them accountable to behave in certain ways. Organisationally, from top down to ground up, every effort has been made to make management and leadership behaviours transparent.

From a managerial point of view, these programs have been successful and Galaxy Institute is in a much better situation than other institutes having initiated them:

> We have had this program being conducted now for three years and we have had about 250 people through and out of those 250 people I would think that there are probably 230 or 240 people who have accepted the concepts of that program. … So what we found was that we had this group of 200 plus frontline managers who were all out there showing a degree of leadership, they were challenging, they were pushing the boundaries, they were looking at better ways to do things, using initiative and that put pressure up to the institute managers.
>
> (Professional development manager)

> We are very fortunate here because of the VET managers' programs and the change of culture that we haven't got half the issues that some of the other Institutes have got.
>
> (Professional development manager)

A cautionary note about the success of these programs was struck by some staff, however. While the training is 'useful', 'non-threatening' and 'quite pleasant', it is not training that the staff themselves have sought:

> It seems pretty high priority if you're the focus of their current revision. … We have had it thrown at us over the last three years, and it has been quite useful. It is non-threatening, it is quite pleasant. They have got skilled teachers. (Staff member)

In the view of this staff member, staff resist teams training because they 'don't want responsibility': 'You think that people are going to be happy to be put into teams and given power yet most of them don't want responsibility; they want to be told what to do, so that is a problem'.

Rebirth and renewal: 'If you are innovative and creative and imaginative you can get extra money to do things'

Management is playing a significant role in the 'period of rebirth' that some, at Satellite, suggest we are entering in VET. New dispositions and skills are being developed to underwrite this rebirth. Innovation, creativity and imagination are given particular emphasis. As a staff member explains:

> VET and TAFE now are also largely to do with putting submissions in for funding. I mean you have to fight for it now along with everybody else. … The money is there; you just have to get it and that is not the way it used to work either. It used to be: you get granted this and you get granted that and you work out how to spend it … Now, you have to prove that you have

> a case to get the money, and if you are innovative and creative and imaginative you can get extra money to do things.

As a whole, management is blessed with some 'very talented people' who possess these qualities and use them to build capacity in the organisation:

> Good leadership is getting people excited about change and making them want to do things. … I think the management at the higher level in the institute has some very talented people and they know how to take the talent that is throughout the Institute and use it in the right places.

However, Galaxy Institute is a very large cluster to implement change within, particularly with the majority of staff seemingly resisting change or not having an understanding of how the private sector is competing against them in terms of business development. Satellite Campus has a long way to go in terms of cultural change, as it would appear to be only slowly edging its way forward.

From a management perspective, it would seem that the greatest hindrance are the people who have been working in the system for a very long time and see no personal advantage for themselves changing, as they are due to retire or resign within the next 5–10 years.

> I have a great deal of trouble in trying to get these guys interested in doing any staff training development. (Frontline manager)

From a staff perspective, the changing conditions of work do not lend themselves to becoming the innovative, creative and imaginative members of the business culture that is being built in TAFE:

> Most sections run on a high level of part-time staff. [Teachers] just go around with a crate, you know, with all their stuff in it or a basket or a box and that is their mobile office. (Staff member)

The growth of financial constraints and increasing competition in the VET sector has given added emphasis to the core-periphery organisational model in TAFEs. There are now fewer full-time lecturers and more part-time lecturers.

There seem to be three predominant areas that stand out at Satellite Campus, each of which involves complex issues that require sensitive handling, the first being communication with the casualised, contingent workforce and across the Faculties which 'operate in silos'. Moreover, 'in a large organisation it is hard to get the enthusiasm to trickle downwards'. The second issue is the division between the two existing sub-cultures, and how to narrow the cultural divide, while the third is developing and maintaining innovative, enthusiastic staff who will assist in helping the organisation realise its mission, vision and values.

The kinds of organisations most likely to prosper in these turbulent times, it is widely argued, are ones characterised by creativity, collaboration, continuous improvement and commitment to maximising their capacity to learn. Satellite is making its passage towards being this kind of organisation. With one eye on business and the other on education, this passage should ultimately be smooth.

The College of Health Sciences

The College of Health Sciences is a private commercial provider delivering a range of certificate courses in the vocational education and training sector and bachelor degrees accredited by the Office of Higher Education. In the last five years, the college has grown from one campus to four campuses, within two states, and an off-campus study centre. The College of Health Sciences is now the largest provider of health science programs in the country with over 250 staff, of whom 49 are full time, and 4000 students.

The business of education

The College of Health Sciences operates in a highly competitive and changing education marketplace in which commercial and educational challenges intertwine. With funding cuts in the public sector, the College of Health Sciences' main competitors are TAFEs and universities who are diversifying into traditionally private training areas and now offer courses down to diploma level: 'On the one hand it is much cheaper for students to go to TAFE. On the other hand … the general public like the word university' (National Director).

To stay competitive, the College of Health Sciences became a degree-awarding institution. It is the only private college in Australia accredited to offer Bachelors Degrees in three modalities in its own right, rather than under a university umbrella like some private providers. Office of Higher Education accreditation of their degrees involves 'a huge accreditation process' and adjustment of the college towards a university model. The College of Health Sciences has undergone major changes in the last 18 months as a requirement of its Office of Higher Education accreditation including the establishment of a Board of Directors, an Academic Board, and a College Council.

The resources of established universities and TAFEs are such that the College of Health Sciences is at a disadvantage when it comes to gaining accreditation of new academic products. It is perceived to be less able to deliver courses of a high academic standard and meet student needs and expectations (libraries, online services etc.). The College of Health Sciences' continuing push for accreditation of degrees, and in particular their plan to apply for masters level accreditation, involves the difficult choice of whether to build alliances with universities, or other providers, or 'go it alone' (National Director).

The processes and outcomes of achieving accreditation impacts on most aspects of the College of Health Sciences: its commercial operations, strategic decision-making, change-management processes, organisational culture, staff training and leadership.

Managing and leading within a unique culture: 'We are a bit different'

Management of the College of Health Sciences is aware of the importance of working with the overall culture of the organisation to maintain cohesion—maintaining valuable aspects while moving the organisation towards its commercial goals and higher academic status.

The college was described as having a 'a strong spiritual orientation … a strong orientation towards the holistic side'.

> Nearly everyone who is here is here because they care passionately about their area; they want to make the world a better place. (Lecturer/practitioner)

This ethos was expressed in a creative strategy to deal with negativity in the college, 'a heart ceremony … to bless the land … and dissipate negative energy'. Similarly, one practical strategy to sustain staff morale is to encourage them to access the student clinics.

A lecturer summed up the intricate relationship between the culture and effective leadership and management, thus:

> So I guess in terms of leadership, you have to have someone who recognises the kind of client group that we have here, understand where they are coming from and understand that there are a lot of lecturers who are thinking along those lines.
>
> So I think whoever is running the show has to be able to model all those things and be a part of that culture and be able to understand it. It's been difficult when we've had administrators come in from other environments that are completely different from this one and don't understand it and they are trying to function the way they did previously in another uni. or TAFE. Because we are a bit different.

To an observer, the college atmosphere is positive and alive. Communication is inclusive and open. Staff respond with a warm willingness. Doors are open and information is shared freely. 'Everybody is not on cloud nine all the time, but generally it's good' (Office Manager).

The college presents a confident and dynamic self-image: 'We've got the best facilities and the best lecturers in the field in this country by far and people know that' (Managing Director). 'It is a place on the go, and still very much changing and developing. It's not like an established university. … there's lots of change and growth happening' (Office Manager).

Strategic management: New directions, new staff, new culture

The College of Health Sciences' strategies for growth and change required new management and staff with skills and experience appropriate to its new direction. A strong mix of business, tertiary administration, and academic leadership and management was evident in the managers and staff interviewed.

The 30-year-old Managing Director joined the College of Health Sciences three years ago with a background in banking and finance though no formal qualification. The National Director joined one year ago and brought to the position a knowledge of the higher education and VET sectors and management. The Campus Director of only two months has experience in the TAFE, higher education and government sectors and post-graduate qualifications in management. The Office Manager came to the college six months ago with administration and project management experience in a regional university. The final interview was with a lecturer/practitioner who has worked 'on and off' for the college for 21 years and in her current full-time position for seven years. She represented the teaching staff and their well-established culture within the organisation.

Management and teaching: Cross-cutting cultures?

The relationship of the long-term teaching staff to the college, the students, their profession, and their practice has often left them 'at odds with' the newer entrepreneurial management culture represented above.

While management focusses on developing a higher educational status for the college, there is, especially from the practitioner/lecturer perspective, a strong value placed on the college as a VET organisation:

> We are very aware of objectives and competencies, and the fact that we are training people to be able to perform these competencies within a national framework. That certainly is part of my thinking and awareness. [We are] very much about producing people who can function at an extremely high level in the workplace. Our emphasis on that is very strong—the practical skills, the real world stuff, so we don't get lost with theory. (Practitioner/lecturer)

It is a major challenge for management to engage the largely part-time teaching staff in the commercial/academic objectives of the College of Health Sciences despite the 'in theory' mutual understanding of the interdependence of their interests: improving consistency and quality of education; the demand of Office of Higher Education for teachers to have higher academic qualifications (when a Certificate 4 in Training and Assessment has previously been the only teaching requirement in VET); and provision of consistent representation, communication and involvement in decision-making for the large group of part-time staff. While many teachers offer valuable experience gained from long-term involvement with the organisation and in their profession, teaching is often only a small percentage of their work and they may have little incentive to meet the emerging requirements of management. A history of poor communication between academic staff and management and four changes of Campus Manager in the last few years have added to the problem.

Performing managerial roles: 'My brief is to double the size of the company in 5 years'

The commercial and educational arms of the organisation are managed separately under the Managing Director and the National Director. They work well together in co-ordinating the interests of their separate domains. Key frontline staff such as the Campus Director and Office Manager report to both the National Director and the Managing Director.

The Managing Director (also Company Secretary) leads the College of Health Sciences' financial and strategic management. He views the college as 'a commercial entity, a privately owned company responsible to shareholders, with the need to ensure profitability, competitiveness in the marketplace':

> It doesn't matter what the product is, from a managing director/business point of view. A college or a company these days needs to be run like a commercial entity. All the major institutions seem to be going that way. And being a privately owned company as well, we have a responsibility to shareholders, which larger institutions don't if they are government funded.
>
> My brief is to double the size of the company in 5 years! We're on target at the moment.

He also has a manager development/human resource role with the full-time administration staff, and in relation to academic staff contracts.

Selling education is a significant aspect of the business. Annually $1.2 million is spent on marketing to the targeted 2% of the population. All administrative staff are engaged in aspects of the college's commercial agenda: 'Everyone in their job centre is responsible for the costs within that job centre. And they are required to show a profit in that area, if it's a profit area'. Like many other commercial organisations, staff are given incentive bonuses according to the enrolment targets that they meet. This is not to say that the commercial side of running the College of Health Sciences overshadows the educational side. While 'there is a fine line' between them, in practice, they appear to sit relatively comfortably, together:

> We know that there is a fine line between business and academic outcomes. If someone walks in, we're not going to cross-sell them five subjects and enrol them full time if they can't achieve that outcome. So we qualify everything we do by saying: 'If you enrol in this number of subjects, you need to be absolutely positive that you can achieve your learning outcome'
>
> (Managing Director)

If the balance tips to the commercial, this is, in part, evidence of the demands made by governments of private institutions. Weathering the changes in legislation is a major financial management challenge: 'The government demands of a private institution are very strict—taxation issues, superannuation issues'. Private providers in the VET system must also respond to ongoing changes imposed by the VET system that conflict with their commercial interests, as the campus manager explained.

> The business relies on customer satisfaction and the repeat business … that's how the name of a private provider is developed, through word of mouth and through people continuing to come back. … It's a matter of making sure you do keep the students happy. At the same time, there are regulations that you need to adhere to in order to keep our registration as an RTO.

From the Managing Director's perspective, the 'biggest challenge is to stay ahead. So we keep track of our competitors'.

The National Director manages the academic aspect of college. It is her role to ensure a good product and that the college meets the requirements of the Office of Higher Education and VET sectors. She outlined the necessary skills for this role:

> Project planning, meeting deadlines, and being good on detail. A capacity to deal with the big picture stuff. … to look outside as much as inside … negotiation and communication skills, being able to market and promote the organisation and to network.

The accreditation processes will be the National Director's main challenge during the next six months. The college's plan to offer Masters programs may involve an alliance with an established university or the formation of a federated university with other private providers. The development of policy and procedures is currently a large part of her work. Agreements with other universities to adapt their policies is allowing some streamlining of this process. VET accreditation requirements are a continuing challenge because 'The VET sector has got much stricter recently and there are changes going on all the time. Many more standards, many more pieces of paper to look after'. The College of Health Sciences must also develop policy related to their industry, for example, HIV and AIDs. The growth of the college has also created a further pressure to document day-to-day operations, as noted by the National Director:

> It's been a small and friendly place where everyone knows how to do everyone else's job. It hasn't seemed so important to document the people that have been in jobs for a while. But [now] we've got a lot of new staff.

Management embraces leadership: 'I'm talking to people all the time'

The National Director leads by participation in projects and a high degree of engagement with staff:

> By the end of the year I'll take on the sponsorship of the manual, then I'll give it to someone else to do and that will be their baby. Same with the staff procedures manual. I might start writing that but then I will give it to some one else. It's not that I want to have it on my plate, but I want to know what's in there to start. I want to have some control in it. That is a lot of work. (National Director)

She is willing to work alongside administrative staff in order to understand the business: 'The first ten days I was here, … I sold the books in the hallway. I've gone … and done word processing. Because I want to know, and I want to be seen as knowing', and maintains an involvement in all aspects of activities: 'There are no barriers. There are always doors open. … I'm talking to people all the time. I think everyone is'.

A major aspect of her role is change management as regards raising the academic standard of teaching:

> They are very good people but there's an inclination to run in, teach, and run out. I don't blame them for that because they are only paid so much an hour. … So trying to get them engaged with the institution and trying to lift the academic standard is a big one. It's a very big one, because they get offended. … It's easier in [another city campus] … because it's a younger college, but here people have been here longer and they don't change.

The lecturer/practitioner described some of the National Director's strategies to engage the staff in the 'new' college culture in this way:

> She wants us to socialise together and have fun together a bit more and talk and discuss issues and have little get togethers. One of the things which is changing now is the part-time staff have this little office which is next to us here where they can drop in and talk about anything which needs to be discussed and have an informal meeting. That's good because there's better communication between people who are teaching the same subject or in the same area. Also if there are problems, it's easier for us to write a little note and drop it in the tray there for admin. saying there are concerns about blah blah blah, can something be done? In that way, those lecturers are going to be better supported. Even just the physical space.

The National Director enjoys the autonomy and flexibility of her role in the College of Health Sciences. She contrasts her management experience at the college with her experience in

universities where there was always someone above her, or some limitation like a committee system:

> There are some things that someone has got to make a decision on. And I've thoroughly enjoyed that. I've had to be more decisive here. I've had to make the decisions and stand by them.
>
> Here, decisions are made only by a couple of people really but probably with a degree of consultation beforehand. … [I] do a lot of talking beforehand to get different views … so I know what people … think before I make the decision.

Managing at the frontline: 'You have to cop a bit sometimes'

The autonomy, the outward focus and strategic aspect of the senior managers' roles contrast with the roles of the frontline managers. The strategic work of frontline managers is limited by the volume of day-to-day operational demands. Their autonomy is constrained by the need to implement organisational changes directed from above and by established models of management and cultures in the different areas of the organisation.

The Office Manager is responsible for a team of six administrative staff. Her role includes 'ensuring process and procedures work is being done, team morale, all that sort of thing'. She sees herself as a trouble-shooter and problem-solver largely at the interface between the public/students and the organisation, as well as between teaching staff and management. Because many of the academic staff are casual and because the turnover is high, there is a large administrative workload and 'there are always issues with new staff'.

> Any academic person … if they have any problem that is in any way shape or form administrative, they come to me as well. So there's a lot of interaction with academic staff at that level.
>
> I have certainly instigated a lot of change in the 6 months that I've been here. And I see that team that I manage as very much the frontline people, because they cop it over the counter from our students. Then I take what they report to me up, to say: 'The policy has to be tightened up or whatever'. … I think the frontline manager role is absolutely critical because it is the transfer of those real needs. It's the people who are there getting feedback from the students. They know what the problems are. They will more often than not say: 'This is not right', or 'If we do it this way, what about these consequences?' because they are at the front counter dealing with that stuff. So the position looking after that is critical because you can then choose to do something about it—which is take it further up the chain to be looked at, considered. … I see it as a pivotal point to feel like there is communication happening both ways.
>
> I see myself in that team. There are the staff members of which sometimes I fill that category, then there are the managers who make the decisions, and sometimes I'm a little bit of a floater in between the two. It's not ever difficult.

The Managing Director described the responsibilities and the skills required at the front line in these terms:

> She's the face of the office, everyone knows her and she needs to be able to deal with people and project that in-control and customer service aspect. You have to be very humble to be a frontline manager. You have to cop a bit sometimes, even if you know you're right. Customer service is the name of the game in any institution. If you don't provide it, your competitor will.
>
> Frontline managers again have to be consistent. The students talk to each other, so that's why that consistency is vital. The competencies … an authoritative nature, being able to explain the decisions to staff. Sometimes the staff come under a bit of fire from disgruntled students, being able to support staff there. Knowledge of the product is vitally important. You can't

> have a discussion with someone about an issue if they know more about it than you, you'll always lose those. A complete knowledge of the database, historical information, historical decisions. All those sorts of things need to be taken into consideration.

The ease and effectiveness of the Office Manager, leading a small team in a supportive management environment, contrasts with the struggle of the Campus Manager to establish her position. The Campus Director is responsible for two campuses and is the frontline manager for 75 academic staff. Her position requires a complex range of knowledge and skills. The position calls for someone who can 'meet the challenges of business but also understands education'.

> The bottom line is important because it ensures continuity of employment and in terms of the college. And in ensuring that the students come back, there is an aspect of quality. People expect value for money for what they're getting, and I'm very conscious of that.
>
> I've been appointed because I have administrative co-ordinating skills. I see that as being fairly essential, that you are able to learn very quickly what the business is doing, but also able to co-ordinate all of the aspects of what's happening.

This position requires a range of high-level skills to manage the interface between the concerns of often long-term and part-time teaching staff and the concerns of new managers (at both senior and frontline level) who bring new agendas. Her position is compromised by a history of poor communication between management and teaching staff and four changes of Campus Manager in the last couple of years. There is a need to build trust given the dual role of staff advocate and representative of management. To achieve this:

> ... every aspect of management training I have done, I am putting into use.
>
> Having the ability to understand how lecturers see it helps you to be able to move them through a process of change. If that's not there and you just become an administrator or someone who has no idea, it's very easy to set that 'them and us' situation up.

Despite her skills, the competing pressures leave her feeling 'hamstrung':

> To a degree there is this upward force and this downward force. ... Ultimately, I would say my loyalty lies with management because to some degree they rely on me providing the quality vision of education, so I'm seen to be the one who will lead the others to where they want to go.

Her role is both operational and strategic. Currently, the operational aspects consume most of her time: 'I thought that my role would probably be looking to long-term planning but it was still locked into some of the here and now issues'. She expects that much of this work will be undertaken by teacher co-ordinators, once they are appointed, thus freeing her to pursue the strategic aspects of her position. As a consequence of her administrative workload, her availability to staff is restricted. While the teaching staff recognise that 'there are all sorts of timetabling and organisational stuff that the directors have to do, which draws them right away from being available to lecturers to solve problems', they tend to talk to the National Director instead, who makes herself available to everyone and is 'somebody who can make things happen very quickly'. The 'floater' frontline managerial role can be the hardest of all to negotiate in contemporary organisations.

Looking to the future: 'We have a couple of up-and-coming entrepreneurs in our midst'

Given the scale and rapidity of the growth of the College of Health Sciences, roles are still evolving for many of the new players as they grow into and prove themselves in new positions. It is clearly a case of 'where there is a will there is a way' in an organisation that supports staff to develop their potential for management and leadership. While staff development for administrative staff appeared to be fairly ad hoc, it was encouraged and available for those who put their hand up:

> ... we have a couple of up-and-coming entrepreneurs in our midst here and you need to be able to mentor them and give them a challenge, otherwise they will go elsewhere.
>
> (Managing Director)

In answer to the question: 'What makes for a "good" VET leader in your view?', the Managing Director emphasised the importance of identifying 'people who really have the instinct to be managers' and mentoring them 'day to day':

> So identifying and fostering leadership. Identifying and fostering people who really have the instinct to be managers. So you need to be able to identify who wants to do what and support them to do that.
>
> I can mentor them day to day in relation to making business decisions.

Academic staff development is tied to Office of Higher Education requirements ('between 2 and 4% of the annual salary' of middle managers is 'budgeted for professional development') and has a more formal process.

While a business approach governs decisions about investment in education and training (influenced, no doubt, by the predominantly part-time status and high turnover of the College of Health Sciences' teachers), management was committed to staff gaining 'a qualification to be recognised when you leave here. We don't expect people to stay here for the rest of their life'. The Managing Director perceived that he was 'very lucky' to have the staff he had: 'I've never worked with a more professional bunch of people in my life. We don't have any HR problems here at all'.

The organisation too appears to be fortunate to have the management it has: 'I suppose I'm a little different in that I've specifically gone out and cultivated my skills in different ways because my aim was to be a leader in the VET sector' (Frontline manager). The goodwill and dynamism of all involved at the College of Health Sciences suggests that its future is secure and that it will continue to contribute significantly to vocational education and training in Australia.

Western College of TAFE

Western College has just reached a milestone in its history. It has been operating as a publicly funded training institution for 100 years although not in its original buildings. Formerly a technical college, it relocated to new premises in the mid-1970s and, over time, has become an increasingly prominent player in the publicly funded VET sector in Western Australia. The college considers itself as delivering training to the para-professional market—the 'high' end of the VET market. As reflected in the composition of its council, there is a strong focus on business and industry. Western College's Council consists of industry and higher education representatives; unlike other TAFE colleges, it has very little community representation.

The Managing Director and the majority of the senior staff occupy the highest floor in the main campus building which is somewhat detached from the hustle and bustle of the main entrance. The college academic environment is organised around schools which are campus-based. Each school has an Academic Director and these staff are located on campus.

Amongst the fine art on view at each of the campuses, the college's strategic plan (in summary) and the college's vision are displayed in close proximity to the main entrances and lifts. The main entrance to the largest campus has a very professional look and feel and students are greeted by an attractive main counter with large overhead posters encouraging them to study at TAFE. While not dressed uniformly, the staff at all main counters at each of the campuses are well groomed and dress smartly. They see themselves as customer services staff whose job it is to greet students.

The VET environment at a local, state and national level: 'The whole sector is currently in a state of flux'

The operating environment of the TAFE sector in Western Australia has changed considerably since the introduction the of the Vocational Education and Training Act in 1996. Under this act, the TAFE colleges in Western Australia received autonomy which resulted in more open competition within the sector and a stronger business focus. As the Academic Director put it, there is a strong push towards a reduced reliance on traditional government funding:

> What has been really clear from the funding body is that government funding is capped and that any growth in student contact hours has to be in fee-for-service activity. This has been very tough.

There has also been an increase in the amount of funding available under public tender. TAFE colleges now have to compete for business alongside other providers, both private and public. Western TAFE's success in this has been mixed. However, in the last 12 months, under a change of government, there has been a policy shift towards co-operation rather than direct competition. The Director indicated she wasn't quite sure how this co-operation would occur:

> At the moment, the whole sector is currently in a state of flux. The new government has ordered a review of the WA training sector. This may mean a more collaborative approach to education and training, using a shared services model and it may mean amalgamations of TAFE colleges.

In line with this 'state of flux', Western TAFE itself has undergone a number of changes. A functional review has been undertaken and a number of structural changes have been recommended, although as communicated to staff, the restructure is 'on hold' pending the outcome of the review of the WA training sector.

Management and staff at Western TAFE are acutely aware of the impact of both national and local issues on the functioning of the college. The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQFT) is on everyone's radar screen. From an academic management perspective, the upgrading of educational skills and qualifications has been neglected for some time:

> Well AQFT is a big issue. We have neglected the educational qualifications of our staff for too long and now it is catching up with us. This is having a huge impact on our staff across the college and there has been no extra funding to support this.

Training packages are also having an impact. In some areas of Western College of TAFE, training packages have been part of delivery for some time; however, the transition from being a 'chalk-and-talk' face-to-face delivery teacher to a facilitator of learning where delivery of skills and competencies can take the form of a combination of classroom activity, work experience under supervision, and technology-driven flexible learning, has been difficult and managers have hit strong pockets of resistance to the change:

> Training packages [are] also having a big impact, although in our area we have had training packages now for 2 years so we are getting this under control. We are still coming to terms with the on-the-job component but this is getting better all the time. Staff are very industry-focussed.

> Flexible delivery, and on-line delivery provides a real challenge for our College. We have been a very face-to-face focussed College so there has been a real cultural transition. I would have to admit that staff in my school have been the early adopters so we have some real innovative practice happening here. But there is always room for improvement.

Senior managers expressed particular concern about the possible impact of the review on the autonomy of the college. The uncertainty presented by the external environment was considered to be affecting staff morale:

> So generally staff are unsure, uncertain and pretty insecure all round. Despite that, Western has some outstanding staff who work very hard to ensure the place ticks over. I have been particularly lucky to have some excellent Program Managers (frontline managers) who have made sure that, despite the changes, the business has turned over.

The introduction of training packages and going 'online' are all part of a national policy 'imperative' which staff at the local level have responded to in varying degrees.

Managerial tasks and roles: 'I really work at developing a significant number of paying projects'

At Western College, the role of the senior manager and the role of the frontline manager are quite distinct. The Academic Director at Western College saw her role as both internally and externally focussed. The external focus, which is seen as more strategic, is about gaining an increase in the college's fee-for-service activity either through winning tenders or selling training solutions to industry and enterprises. The internal focus is to assist the frontline managers to operationalise the college's strategic directions.

> In my external focus, I really work at developing a significant number of paying projects or initiatives that you establish in both the community and with businesses, which are backed by your [delivery] team. There is core business going on, and you are supporting your staff to do that and adding value to what they do, but [you are also] identify[ing] training opportunities or initiatives out there [in industry].
>
> My [internal] role is very much to support managers in what is going on and provide leadership and assist them with their problems. … Really as a Director, it is a lot about 'How do we assist staff in implementing the College's strategic directions?'

Being innovative and creative are important capabilities amongst the senior management team.

> We are also looking for breakthrough stuff, innovative and creative ways of doing things. I have the luxury of being able to get out and do that and then identify program areas in my school to implement it.

By comparison, there is a common belief at Western College of TAFE that the program managers (frontline managers), who are operationalising both the college's strategic directions and the innovative projects identified by senior management, have a particularly demanding role. In fact the responsibilities and challenges of the frontline manager were acknowledged to be excessive:

> I would have to say that I think that at the frontline management level in VET, the responsibilities and challenges are quite onerous, in fact, they are excessive. I think at my level, which is senior level, … [they are] less so.

A lecturer at Western College of TAFE summed up her feeling about the job of the frontline manager in these terms:

> I think they are a bit [like] the meat in the sandwich. They do a hell of a lot of work; it is not my thing. But they have so much knowledge buzzing around in their heads. I wouldn't do their job, ever. If you were single and didn't have a life, it would be perfect for you. You would be very busy all the time. I actually feel sorry for them. I hope they get paid well.

Playing piggy in the middle

Interestingly enough, when asked about their role, the frontline managers saw themselves as part of management and part of staff, as well as the link between senior management and lecturing staff:

> I really do often feel that the upper level of management doesn't understand what a program manager has to do. It is a huge role. … I definitely [feel like the] ham in the sandwich, because we are the people that are rolling [everything] out. Every time there is a message, a new system, a new amount of training, AQTF, anything new, it is the program manager's job to roll it out. … So we can be the ham in the sandwich. Also, other things, like I am doing a lot with partnerships with industry at the moment and the partnerships invariably, or any of those sorts of proposals, will have to go to upper management to get the sign-off, but meanwhile it is me having done my research, put forward my recommendations, asked for an answer, and industry are belting at the door every day saying: 'What's happening, have we got an answer, when can we get an answer?' and you are just stuck.
>
> And I guess [I am] just another staff member, that applies, because at times you really do feel like you are not appreciated, a lot of times it is: 'Give me, give me, give me', never: 'Thank you for that'.

TAFE as a business: 'We have to come up with a business idea'

The key driver for the changing role of the senior managers and frontline managers of late has been the strong business focus and this focus appears to be a result of a number of factors. These include the decrease in available funding to support the college's 'hunger' for technology, the introduction of government initiatives like Australian Quality Training Framework, training packages, and graded assessment. All these initiatives have been introduced on a cost-neutral basis.

This business focus plays out at all levels. A staff member stated that:

> In our performance management with our Program Manager, we have to come up with a business idea for fee-for-service. It is a big ask when you have everything else to do. Like I have 120 students to oversee, and all the curriculum you have to cover and all the delivery you have to do. It is hard.
>
> I need the skills to chase business, I guess you would call that sales and marketing. I have an educational background and I am not confident in the management and business side of VET. I don't feel comfortable to be able to say: 'We are running this course, please pay us your money'. If we need to do that, then we need to develop these skills.

From a frontline management perspective, the response is more considered:

> Say 3 years ago we had the time to focus on assessment and delivery, what our core business is all about. There wasn't the focus on fee-for-service or commercial work. So it is those things that have really changed in the last 2 years that I have been involved [as a frontline manag r]. My perception is that's where the pressure's beginning to increase. So we are now having to do mandatory staff performance appraisals three to four times a year. We certainly have mandatory OH&S inspections and attend training and committees and whatever else. Fee-for-service or commercial work is now a real focus for every program area, and we are expected now to set targets at the beginning of the year and not only monitor and achieve those, but increase our business on a yearly basis. There is also a lot of reporting back to the Director on that; obviously she is sitting on the commercial board.

Required knowledge and skills: 'I work on relationships'

When discussing with staff the type of expertise and skills required for management and leadership in relation to their changing roles, their responses featured words like, 'disciplined', 'business like', 'visionary', and 'external focus'. There was also a sense that you need to work on relationships both internally and externally as a critical part of the job. But it would also seem that from a frontline manager's perspective, there is more autonomy, there is a sense of serving two masters, there is a greater requirement for flexibility, adaptability and an ability to problem-solve.

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The Academic Director saw her role as a leadership one requiring certain specific skills:

> Well you've certainly got to have a discipline about you in your approach to management but equally you have got to be very visionary. I think you've got to be able to have an external focus and although the College sets the vision and sets the strategic objectives, you have to be able to visualise that, interpret that and communicate it to your staff. You need to see how that can be applied and inspire and lead your staff. You have to know how the system operates and see how the support services impact and support your delivery area and have an external focus. I have found the most effective strategy in my school has been to be community-based and I work on relationships, collegiate relationships with other colleagues in industry. I spend a large amount of my time meeting with them both on campus and out in their workplaces. That continually keeps me current and focussed on training for industry.
>
> You also have to be conceptual, not just on a business level, you need to be able to translate that need, that problem, into the world of our business, … and you really need to be quite skilled at translating that quite automatically. So that you can both contribute to the discussion, but also so that they can see your relevance.

For the frontline managers, the role is very much a relationship management role, both leading and managing, with strong skills and competencies in negotiation. Accordingly, a frontline manager who 'looks after a HR team' stated:

> I would say probably I need to be most competent in interpersonal or communication skills from a number of aspects, one is people management, so the team I directly manage, a lot [of this management] is about helping them to prioritise, to negotiate, and understand the workloads. Also in my [staff training] role in HR, dealing with my direct customers, that is all about communication, people skills as well.

The academic frontline manager was more pragmatic in her response. Given the nature of the work and the workload of an academic frontline manager, the immediate requirement is time management and organisational skills.

> I guess the biggest issue I would see at the moment is probably the competing demands of some of these high-priority objectives that come down. Good time management, must be well organised. I guess I would say that the key things you really need these days, and even with the commercial work, you really need to have that mindset and the attitude that you are happy to go out [to industry] and you are happy to put proposals to people and look at what their needs are. So I guess the commercial and industry focus has become very important, but certainly time management and organisation, otherwise you just couldn't get through the day.

In a system where the funding arrangements are pressuring TAFE colleges to run in an increasingly 'lean' way, colleges like Western have responded by cutting management levels, resulting in flatter structures. The flattening of organisational structures has impacted directly on the managerial role. More accessibility to senior management and corporate decision-making is provided through flatter structures. However, more is now expected of both senior management and frontline management. Managers now need to take on more of a leadership role.

> These days just the requirement put on managers is to have that leadership visionary role. … I think there are fewer leaders in the organisation at a higher level so staff are looking for leadership much closer to home. As a manager, you often have to be your own leader … because there is less management structures now and not only do the tasks have to go somewhere but the roles and responsibilities have to go somewhere as well. While I think a lot has gone up [to senior management], I think a hell of a lot has been delegated down. Most of the grunt happens at the frontline manager level. If I think about my area, Staff Training, we have pulled out the supervisor level, that means that people like myself are a supervisor and a manager rolled into one. I also have to work at both a strategic and an operational level.

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A business leader or an academic leader or both?

While there was some consensus reached by the staff interviewed that managers needed to have both management and leadership skills, there was a distinct difference between the Academic Director and the academic frontline manager regarding whether the focus should be on business or education. The Academic Director, while acknowledging that VET leaders need to focus on both business and education, commented that the current focus needs to be educational: that there has been a lack of respect for staff at Western College of TAFE who have educational knowledge and skills. It was her belief that educational knowledge is an important component of leadership in VET:

> I think there needs to be both an educational and vocational focus for management and leadership but particularly educational. I think the focus on educational has been lacking. … There has been a disregard for people with educational knowledge and skills as being a criterion for being a leader and I believe that should be all the way to the top, that is, including the CEO.

The academic frontline manager saw this a little differently. From the frontline management perspective, there is a need to be involved with industry at a strategic level. That requires both leadership and good negotiation skills. Her belief was that lecturers are professional enough and capable enough to provide academic leadership and the frontline manager could thus focus on business needs and working closely with industry:

> I think it is about involvement with industry, that definitely needs leadership and good negotiation [skills]. It has to be a strategic focus … because if it doesn't get built in at the strategic level, there is a good chance it won't happen. I actually don't think [the] focus has to be on educational leadership, I think we have got capable academic staff that can be responsible for academic leadership. I don't think that it should be necessarily a prime focus for the program manager. I think their focus needs to be more business orientated.

So what does the future hold?

There are some fairly significant changes happening at both a local, state and national level that are currently impacting on Western College of TAFE but despite this, the staff interviewed were positive about the future. Staff generally thought that the college was well led and, to varying degrees, felt that the focus needed to shift more to an educational perspective rather than a business one. For many of the academic staff, there is a view that the Australian Qualifications Training Framework is actually a good thing for the VET sector and for Western College in particular, in that it has made the college focus on, and actually fund, programs that will ensure the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment. At senior management level, it is seen as a good thing to have implemented from an educational point of view; however, from a business perspective, it creates a big financial burden which is largely unfunded.

TAFE colleges in Western Australia have been operating in a pretty 'lean and mean' environment for a few years now and it is certainly acknowledged that the impact of these changes is felt most heavily at the frontline manager level. The risk the college runs is, if these people leave, and they are starting to, all that experiential knowledge about the business, and all that organisational memory about education, will leave with them. 'My worry is that from a risk analysis perspective, this could create a big gap for us. Frontline managers have unique skills and we don't look after them'.

Senior management at Western College is well aware of gaps that could be created through the loss of capable staff and, to their credit, well on the way towards addressing this issue.

Western Group Training Company

Western Group Training Company employs more than twenty staff and a significant number of apprentices and trainees in the following industries: agricultural machinery, electrical, small business, information technology, warehousing, office administration and others. Formed in the early 1990s, the company has grown at the rate of between 5 and 15% per annum. However, at the end of 2000, the business 'went back to the tune of 20%' when the industries were set back by implementation of the GST.

The core business of Western Group Training Company is the employment and management of apprentices and trainees who are 'loaned out to' host employers, predominantly medium and smaller employers who can't commit to a long-term contract of employment. Specifically, Western Group Training Company matches employers and students, conducts workplace health and safety induction, pays wages, tax, superannuation and workers' compensation, and invoices the host employer weekly. The group training company also provides vocational training through school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. As a registered training organisation, it offers training under a user choice contract with the state government. In conducting this training, it constitutes itself as providing an alternative to traditional TAFE colleges, in terms of its small size and self-paced mode of delivery.

A management team led by the General Manager includes the Financial Controller, Marketing and Promotion Manager and the Divisional team leaders. Many of these positions have multiple functions because the organisation is currently 'pretty lean'. The GM presently performs the roles of financial controller, operations manager, and human resources developer, with responsibilities shared by the management team. The GM reports to a volunteer Board of Directors representing the industries outlined above.

A community service philosophy, a distinguishing feature of the early years of group training companies, pervades Western Group Training Company. It is engendered within the organisation through the General Manager's somewhat charismatic leadership approach. He explained that Western Group Training Company's role is to 'create an opportunity for a young person', 'create a life after school for students', where 'the employment risk is taken up by the company and not by the individual small employer'. Western Group Training Company is also committed to building capacity in the community and industry, through workforce planning. For the General Manager, the youth of today will be 'the backbone of the state's and Australia's workforce ten years down the track'. The organisation promotes these values in schools, industry and the community.

The new operating environment: 'It is quite a fight'

Western Group Training Company aims to build a strong, future workforce through providing ongoing employment for young people. In the current operating environment however, these aims are increasingly difficult to achieve. Over the last few years, VET, and the industries. Western Group Training Company services, have been subjected to many legislative and regulatory changes. Workplace health and safety is a major cost to group training company. For example, they must train their many apprentices in the electrical industry in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and confined space rescue practices. The General Manager pointed out that the cost of making the apprentices 'a better proposition in the industry', by way of this training, is carried by the group training company.

Complex industrial awards require complex administrative systems. The industrial award system was simple in the past. Now 'we have got certified agreements, enterprise bargaining agreements, we still have some awards' and so it goes on:

> So where we used to just refer to an Award and say: 'This is that person's rate of pay', we now have to have a payroll search that is capable of dealing with literally a whole myriad of completely new ways of doing things.

The General Manager provided the following example of the 'complexities of business in a not-for-profit, community-based organisation':

> If a wage rise comes in and they say retrospectively, you have got to backdate your people to July or September, there is no way that I can recover that retrospectively, so I have to have money to be able to pay (x number of) kids or more, 3 months back pay. So, you have to have money to be able to create a situation where you can deal with these contingencies and miscellaneous things and still keep the business afloat. And it is quite a fight. … Those are the things that have become more difficult.

The GST has created major cash flow problems for Western Group Training Company because they have to pay GST on their billings for apprentices' wages. The General Manager thought it 'almost bizarre' that a company whose 'primary reason for being is to employ young people … [should] have to pay the state government $20 000 in payroll tax'. That particular compliance issue costs the company $400 per week and 'means effectively, it takes a person off my payroll'. Group training companies efforts to gain exemption have been unsuccessful.

Insurance premiums are also being pushed up by increasing litigation for personal injuries: 'We have got ambulance chasers who are saying to kids … "Come with us" … and next thing, you have got claims for $500 000, $150 000'. Understandably, the General Manager has formed the view that 'every time you bring in stricter controls, you increase the costs of those services. … There are all these compliance costs that are being passed on to the consumer. … It is very difficult to try and plan ahead when we live in such uncertain times'.

Western Group Training Company requires the capacity to respond quickly to changes in legislation and regulation, the changing shape of industry and the workforce, and the changing needs of young people as trainees. According to the frontline manager, keeping up with these changes is 'the hardest part of the job':

> The … state government makes it our responsibility to keep up with the changes. They put all the responsibility off to the RTOs to monitor changes to legislation. They don't even tell you what the changes are, you have to look at the website, and I don't have the time to read the whole damn thing. They could make it easy.
>
> One person [is] employed full time now working … [on] Commonwealth Government compliance issues, tax issues, paperwork issues, forms, all of these kind of things.
>
> (General Manager)

Quality assurance documentation is also a major undertaking:

> We have just … been through two government audits simultaneously—five auditors were here. One works for the user choice contract, one is for the RTO and Quality Assurance. So to do what we do, we have to be a quality-assured place and that means we have got to fulfill all of these systems reviews. And at the same time, because we are ever-changing, what happens is, unless we have got the processes properly documented, things can fall through the cracks, if you like. So we are constantly looking at trying to introduce appropriate systems which enable us to do what we have to do. (General Manager)
>
> From the college side of things at the moment, the biggest issues are changes in respect to the Australian Quality Training Framework as it is recording the benchmark.
>
> (Administration Officer)

The new operating environment is an environment where government initiatives like the Australian Quality Training Framework and training packages mean that organisations and individuals are only one step ahead, if ahead at all. The senior instructor/frontline manager explained the challenge of staying ahead with respect to new programs and having resources in place to deliver them, in this way:

> If there is a new government project suddenly, if we are going to do that, we have got to bid for the contract … implement it, deliver, report. … So, you may have to develop a whole

swag of things that are going to be around for a year or 18 months or more and then suddenly the plug is pulled on that program. It no longer exists. You have got people on your payroll and systems in place for something that has become defunct. And then in 3 months time, they will bring something else out under a new name and you have got to start the process all over again.

Management and leadership roles: 'You … have to be a Jack of all trades'

Western Group Training Company liaises with manufacturers and high schools to target students who are best suited to the trades area. Company staff visit schools to explain the training options that are available, so students can investigate the programs offered and choose the right subjects at school. Marketing trades can require the promotion of positive perceptions of trade work and its changing nature. Western Group Training Company staff often encounter the 'blue collar stigma … that it would be better for a person to become a bank teller … than to be an electrical fitter mechanic'. The company is also aware that they 'are now interviewing young people for the first time at Grade 10 whose job—that they will spend the rest of their lives doing, possibly—has not yet been invented'. They also push the barriers in traditional male industries to create more opportunities for women and have achieved a small increase in female participation.

There are various tensions that management and staff at Western Group Training Company mediate in the course of their work. They 'toggle' between industry and government and business and education:

> I think the main aim of a government apprenticeship is to get a skilled workforce, whereas the motivation of industry out there, they probably have a totally different perception [that is] of apprentices as cheaper labour. We have to sell the company as a business, a provider of labour, but I think the true sense of it, it's still an education provider. (Staff member)

'We help to demystify' a 'great deal of confusion' which has resulted from the creation of different layers of bureaucracy and a 'whole swag of acronyms'. In the past, signing up a young person to do an apprenticeship was simple. Now, the employer has to deal with: 'New apprenticeship centres, RTOs, party of agreements, different payments for different things, ATO claims, commencement payments'. Western Group Training Company staff are 'constantly being asked to provide advice on lots of things that are creating problems'. As the frontline manager sees it: 'You … have to be a Jack of all trades':

> You have to know something about everything. You don't have to be an expert at everything, but you have to have a HR hat, you have to have an EEO hat and Health and Safety hat, an Affirmative Action hat [and] be aware of your students' emotional home life concerns.

New clients, new skills: 'There has to be the ability to … communicate'

Group training companies must adjust to a new style of trainee. The instructors have to manage the diverse needs of a different cohort of students. Apprentices and trainees are coming to providers with a different sense of self, different skills, and different expectations of work and learning:

> Today's young people, in lots of cases, are desperately looking for something … that they can hold on to. They can have a brain surgeon [for a parent] and yet have no parental input into their development because it is like: 'Here is $50, get lost'. (General Manager)

> A lot of children coming out of Queensland public high schools cannot read or write. I have to identify that and send them for training and find funding to pay for it. (Frontline manager)

> The education system quite often has brought young people up never to take anything for granted and always to ask questions. If you are given a job in a workplace and you keep on asking: 'Why am I here', instead of doing [the job] and asking afterwards, it can create major problems. (General Manager)

The most important characteristic of the work of managing and leading young people at Western Group Training Company is effective communication, thus, staff must have 'time for people. You have to make yourself available for the staff and students' (Frontline manager). Accordingly, professional development is required in 'human resources, how to deal with and understand people, understand that people come from diverse backgrounds'.

The General Manager strongly upheld the idea that young people 'are born in a different age' and need to be treated with respect and at an appropriate level:

> There has to be the ability to be able to communicate. You don't patronise your people, you do not talk down to young people. In effect, you acknowledge that they are born in a different age to your self.

Further to communication, the critical capability that all staff are required to demonstrate is care. Pastoral care is 'an integral component' of the work:

> Every time a phone rings for us, it could be a major crisis. Our raw material are all young people between the ages of 16 and 21. Everyone has got their hormones jumping … And everyone is a real fistful to control. … There could be somebody that has been caught smoking marijuana. Somebody never rolled up for work because they have taken a drug overdose. Somebody is in the watch house because they have been in a car accident and they have been pinched for speeding. Now all of these things have become part of the big mix. And they would rather speak to us than speak to Mum and Dad in lots of cases.
>
> (General Manager)

> You have to have an understanding of young people. I'd say you have to be understanding, you should be supportive rather than destructive, which is difficult considering the way some of the kids are. (Frontline manager)

This can be stressful for staff: 'The kids physically drain me a lot of times. … A lot of our courses are for kids who dropped out between Grade 10 and 12 and they have extra needs'. Providing pastoral care for individuals is at the time putting something valuable back into communities. Group training companies play an important role in building the capacity of rural communities when they succeed at keeping young people within them:

> Imagine a GTC in a place like Charters Towers or Mt Isa. They are the largest employer. They are the glue that holds the communities together. Because if all the young people drift away from regional towns and come to the big smoke, those towns will die on the vine. … If companies like GTCs can keep young people within that community and keep them working, then they will stay there and the communities will still live. (General Manager)

Much of this pastoral work is invisible however, and not readily acknowledged as central to the provision of vocational education and training. Certainly, it is not adequately funded: 'Nobody wants to pay for it'. Furthermore, providing pastoral care may distract staff from the core of Western Group Training Company's business which is making sales:

> It's not an easy job to convince host employers to go through a GTC; it is difficult in these times. Especially when they can do it themselves and get the money from the government. So you need a certain type of person to be in employment. So having those people on the team that understand that and can make those sales is obviously of utmost importance when that is the core of your business. (Staff member)

The penalties attached to not making sales and meeting sales targets are quite severe: 'It causes cash flow problems … less money to pay for everything: the rent, the lights, the wages, superannuation. There is pressure, discussions take place on a weekly basis about sales targets not being met'.

'All the people have multiple functions'

In line with other VET organisations, there has been a decrease in the number of continuing positions available at Western Group Training Company. Staff reductions have meant that management is increasingly the responsibility of a wider range of staff, including the instructional staff. In the words of the frontline manager: 'Because we are pretty lean, all the people have multiple functions'. Staff reductions have created difficulties such that the company is 'struggling a little bit':

> We need a Human Resources Manager or Operations Manager. That is very, very important, and without that, it is very difficult at times, because they [the instructors] don't really have anyone to turn to.
>
> [On] the operations side, I suppose it's been spread out throughout the team leaders. I think that's not so good in the long run because nobody really knows who is responsible for [what]. Some things don't get done as well as when someone is solely responsible for that area.
>
> Your general manager is so busy, he can't really look after all those little things. … People are trying to handle it themselves not knowing really where to go.
>
> I think at this stage we're struggling a little bit only because we are running out of time to assist one another. We don't have the time to listen to each other's problems. It's quick fixes. It's all short-term solutions.

Management strategy: 'Using collective intelligence to create … solutions'

The General Manager summed up his conceptual model of Western Group Training Company and its response to the above challenges in these words: 'This company by nature is organistic rather than mechanistic. And that was one of the things we had to realise: we have to have a system in place which allows the flexibility to be able to deal with this simultaneous matrix of impulses'. The 'system' involves a cohesive culture based on shared values and experience, open communication, and inclusive and supportive practices.

Western Group Training Company combines dynamic leadership with an inclusive team-based operating structure. The result is a high level of staff loyalty to organisational goals. Management meetings are held weekly and attended by all the team leaders and managers. The General Manager works on the principle of 'using collective intelligence to create ways to be able to come up with solutions'. The frontline manager described how the management team functions:

> The GM is a very good communicator. He tells his team leaders everything. Whether they pass the information on is up to them. For myself, I have a meeting with my guys every Monday. I pass all of the information down to them so they don't have to hear rumours floating around. They get it from the horse's mouth. I'm a part of the organisation here. I was hired in as a frontline manager.

The General Manager is an idealistic, paternal figure who mentors and supports 'his people' and promotes commitment to the organisation's caring values. In conducting the interview with him, he suggested: 'When you meet my people … just see if it shows through—[see] if there is that coloured cord that is tied to our ankles that connects us all together'.

The connecting cord was indeed, apparent. The General Manager was spoken of with warm regard and respect: 'He is like a really sort of father figure to everybody in the organisation which is good I think'. '[The General Manager] is a good boss to work for. He is probably one of the best people I've ever worked for. … It takes a lot to crack him. You have got to do a lot of bad things before he finally spits the dummy at you'.

An open door policy maintained by the General Manager is also reflected at the frontline. With respect to his direct supervisor, a staffer stated:

> His door is always open. He is friendly and as soon as you have got an issue with something, I can address that with him. He looks at it with me and if he thinks it's a good idea, great, we'll run with it and he really listens to what I have to say, what I would change. In that way it's really good because, as I said, that door is always open so I can address any issues that I've got. And if I'm wrong, they'll tell me I'm wrong and that's fine as well.

Leadership at Western Group Training Company and in VET: 'We need people with vision'

In the General Manager's view, 'there is no room for the traditionalist tunnel vision type person' in VET. 'We need people with vision … passion … a belief in what we are trying to achieve'. The general manager is a person with vision and passion. By all accounts, he qualifies as a 'good VET leader'. According to his personal assistant, he:

> Instils trust throughout his staff and the philosophy that hopefully, for the sales managers, it's a passion for them to do what they actually do. It's not just a job. Because they would like to care for the kids and see them get work. … It's very rewarding for staff. And I think for most of the sales staff, it's a little bit of a passion to get out there and do it. They are committed to the apprentices and trainees that they look after; they really do look after them.

The coloured cord again.

Good VET leaders, in the General Manager's view, must be prepared to learn: 'You have constantly got to be looking at how to improve your own skills. Personal professional development is important. You have to personally be of a frame of mind that you need to keep an open mind and always be prepared to learn'.

A good part of this learning involves networking and maintaining industry links. The General Manager spoke at length of the importance of understanding Australian industry and maintaining networks to keep in contact with business peers. Knowing what is happening in industry is essential in an environment where 'icons of Australian industry have just disappeared'.

The General Manager promoted the idea of 'cross-pollination' between education and industry: 'An educationalist could take a sabbatical in a manufacturing plant … or some company … where they could look at the structure of a private enterprise company that deals with the vagaries of world trade'. People from industry could spend some time looking at academia to determine the possibility of a 'meeting of the minds'. The frontline manager also suggested the benefits of this process. 'Myself, I'd like to have more contact with the automotive industry. If I could go to a manufacturer and work with him for a few months [we] all would benefit'.

Sustaining valued management and leadership: 'They gradually started sending me to different courses'

Organisational development and succession planning is a high priority in Western Group Training Company. Staff development creates organisational knowledge and strengthens staff commitment to the organisation. The General Manager saw staff development as necessary to fulfill organisational obligations: 'We send our people away to do various things, train-the-trainer courses, things that are appropriate to their job so that what they learn they bring back and assist the company to better fulfill its obligation'. Staff development, including management development, was not seen as a cost to the company but rather an investment: 'It's an investment purpose for the company to create that commitment from employees and get better value out of their employment' (Administration Officer).

Professional development, and especially leadership training, is well supported at Western Group Training Company: 'All of my middle managers have done that Leadership Australia middle managers course'. 'I did a Diploma in Business Management when I was 56 years old'. Staff

members feel supported by training opportunities and are committed to the organisation as a consequence:

> I've been here a year and a half and I started doing the basic college admin. and student admin. and they gradually started sending me to different courses—literacy, numeracy support classes or group workshops, and extra projects that they are getting me to take on. They got me involved in the quality assurances and are getting me into workplace health and safety. Not only me though, everybody. It's not just me; it's across the board.

History and the 'coloured cord': Lessons for leadership in VET?

We have seen that culture maintenance, remembering what they are there for, and promoting the continued relevance of group training companies, are at the core of Western Group Training Company management. The shared history and vision creates cohesion throughout the organisation despite the challenging environment in which it operates.

The company boardroom features photos and shields documenting the achievements of those who have trained and worked there. The General Manager explained:

> I set that up as a process because I wanted to create some history and history I found in terms of people who have achieved. I now host employers who come back to me and say: 'I remember when you gave me a job and you were the only person who gave me a chance, but now I am in a position where I have got my first garage ... so I come back to you'. Now that is where you get a kick. That is where you get a warm glow. And everybody here, we almost go around the office giving the high fives when we get one of those because it means it really works. And on that shield you will see some names of people who, seven years ago, left this company to go out there to do their stint in the big wide world and two of them are back here now working for this company. So, in a trade sense, they were journeymen in the real sense. ... I have got to the top of the pile. And now I want to come back and pass that on to young people. And there are quite a few on the shield there.

Western Group Training Company is a company that is preparing for a time when 'we will need to support ourselves completely and not rely on the government to support us'. This preparation is being made in various, different ways. Creating history through finding people who have achieved, and connecting these people through the 'coloured cord', may well be the most powerful of these ways.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Management and Leadership in Training Organisations Survey

NCVER

Mark your answers by filling in the responses as shown:

Use black/blue pen only.
Do NOT use a red or felt-tip pen.
Indicate your answer by filling in or writing in the box provided.
Erase or white-out errors completely.

Example ☐ ☐ ☐ ■ ☐

This short survey is being sent to a randomly selected sample of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in five States. Authorised by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, it forms part of a research project which aims to improve management and leadership in the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

*We kindly request that the questionnaire be completed by **executive managers** (CEOs, Managing Directors, Directors) or **senior managers** with responsibility for educational development/training and development.*

As you complete the questionnaire, key terms are being utilised: 'Training Organisation' means an organisation that has been registered by a State Training Authority to offer vocational education and training programs. 'Vocational education and training' means education and training which is recognised by these Training Authorities. A 'frontline manager' is a first level manager, a manager of a work team, typically, a person who co-ordinates teaching programs or manages training projects (eg Program Co-ordinator, Project Team Leader). A 'senior manager' is a manager who has a high-level, specific responsibility, such as running a department, sector or section. If you are in a multi-campus or multi-site organisation, 'organisation' means the site or campus you work mostly from.

Section 1: Respondent Details

For each question, please mark ONE box, unless otherwise asked.

1. What TYPE of TRAINING ORGANISATION is your organisation?

- ☐ TAFE Institute
- ☐ Enterprise
- ☐ Consultancy
- ☐ Private Commercial Provider eg business college
- ☐ Group Training Company
- ☐ Industry Provider (eg industry skills centre)
- ☐ Professional/Industry Association
- ☐ Other, *please specify*

2. What TYPE of POSITIONS qualify in your organisation under the terms senior manager and frontline manager? (eg Human Resources Manager and Program Co-ordinator, respectively)

Senior Manager: _____ Frontline Manager: _____

3. What POSITION do you hold within your organisation? (eg CEO) _____

4. With respect to the following INDUSTRIES, what are the main industries for which your organisation provides training?
Mark as MANY boxes as appropriate.

- ☐ Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- ☐ Mining
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Electricity, gas and water
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Wholesale trade
- ☐ Retail
- ☐ Accommodation, cafes and restaurants
- ☐ Personal and other services
- ☐ Transport and storage
- ☐ Communication services
- ☐ Finance and insurance
- ☐ Property and business services
- ☐ Government administration and defence
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Health and community services
- ☐ Cultural and recreational services
- ☐ Other, *please specify*

5. Is your organisation ☐ **single site?** ☐ **multi site?**

6. How many EMPLOYEES (full-time, part-time & casual) does your organisation employ?

- ☐ 10 or less
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 21-50
- ☐ 51-100
- ☐ 101-500
- ☐ 501-1000
- ☐ Over 1000

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7. **How many SENIOR MANAGERS are there in your organisation?**

☐ 10 or less ☐ 11-20 ☐ 21-50 ☐ 51-100 ☐ Over 100

8. **How many FRONTLINE MANAGERS are there in your organisation?**

☐ 10 or less ☐ 11-20 ☐ 21-50 ☐ 51-100 ☐ Over 100

9. **In which STATE is your organisation based?**

☐ NSW ☐ QLD ☐ SA ☐ VIC ☐ WA

10. **In which GEOGRAPHICAL AREA is your organisation located?**

☐ Metropolitan area ☐ Non-metropolitan area ☐ Other, *please specify*

11. **What is your GENDER?** ☐ Male ☐ Female

Section 2: The VET context

12. **Various CHALLENGES that training organisations have had to face in the recent past are listed below. With respect to management and leadership, which of these challenges, if any, has played a CRITICAL ROLE in your organisation?** *Please assign a rating on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents least critical and 5 represents most critical, by marking ONE box only for each statement.*

Challenges	*Least Critical*		*Critical*		*Most Critical*	*Not Applicable*
Building partnerships with business and industry	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Expanding access to VET for disadvantaged groups	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Seeking extra funding	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Utilising new management techniques	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Delivering off-shore (ie international education and training)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Utilising new technology (eg e-learning)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Implementing VET policy (eg Training Packages)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Delivering training on demand	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Competing with other training providers	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Restructuring	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Other? *Please specify:*	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐

13. **Various MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP ISSUES are listed below. How PRESSING is each issue for your organisation?** *Mark ONE box only for each statement.*

Issues	*Least Pressing*		*Pressing*		*Most Pressing*	*Not Applicable*
Developing a client orientation within the organisation	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Providing leadership in teaching and learning	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Fostering the devolution of decision making	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Ensuring targets are met (eg enrolments)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Balancing entrepreneurial capability with educational function	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Developing alliances/links/partnerships	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Planning for succession	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Providing strategic focus and direction (eg envisaging future trends)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Harnessing the power of new technology	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Creating and sustaining a shared vision/shared values	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Other? *Please specify:*	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐

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Section 3: The changing roles of VET managers

14. What are the main management TASKS of senior managers within your training organisation?
Mark as MANY boxes as appropriate.

- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Facilities
- ☐ Marketing & Development
- ☐ Quality & Planning
- ☐ Human Resources Development
- ☐ Information Systems
- ☐ Business Development
- ☐ International Operations
- ☐ Other, *please specify*

15. Various ACTIVITIES which senior managers and leaders in the VET sector are engaged in are listed below. In relation to your organisation, how IMPORTANT are these activities to the performance of the senior managerial role?
Mark ONE box only for each statement.

Activities	*Not at all Important*				*Extremely Important*	*Not Applicable*
Leading organisational change	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Promoting a clear vision for the organisation	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Developing middle and front line managers	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Developing new products and services	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Sourcing new clients	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Generating strategic initiatives	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Providing educational leadership	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Addressing accountability issues	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Building business, industry and community links	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Obtaining financial resources	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Other? *Please specify*	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐

16. What are the main management TASKS of frontline managers within your training organisation?
Mark as MANY boxes as appropriate.

- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Supervision (student placements)
- ☐ Marketing & Development
- ☐ Co-ordination (scheduling staff)
- ☐ Team Leadership
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Staff Development
- ☐ Liaison
- ☐ Other, *please specify*

17. Various ACTIVITIES which frontline managers in the VET sector are engaged in are listed below. In relation to your organisation, how IMPORTANT are the following activities to the performance of the frontline managerial role?
Mark ONE box only for each statement.

Activities	*Not at all Important*				*Extremely Important*	*Not Applicable*
Supervising sessional and casual staff	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Co-ordinating work activities (eg program management)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Providing pastoral care (eg dealing with student concerns)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Budgeting and financing (eg monitoring resource use)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Providing educational leadership	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Implementing change	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Developing team members (eg coaching and mentoring)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Recruiting new clients	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Administration (eg staff timetables, student enrolments)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Building business, industry and community links	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Other? *Please specify*						

18. As an executive or senior manager and leader in the VET sector, what 3 major changes to your management and leadership ROLES have you experienced in the recent past? *(Please specify in point form.)*

19. What will be the main changes to these ROLES in the next five years? *(Please write down anything that comes to mind.)*

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Section 4: Responding to changing roles

20. Various management and leadership CAPABILITIES are listed below. As an executive or senior manager and leader in the VET sector, to what extent do you agree that you require these capabilities in order to perform your management and leadership roles? *Indicate your level of agreement by marking ONE box only for each statement.*

Capabilities	*Strongly Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Neither Agree nor Disagree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*	*Not Applicable*
Corporate vision and direction (eg promoting a vision, involving people in achieving vision)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Strategic focus (eg envisaging future directions, undertaking strategic analysis)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Achieving outcomes (eg setting clear standards, translating ideas into results)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Developing and managing resources (eg allocating resources to achieve outcomes)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Change leadership (eg communicating the need for change, working with ambiguity)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Interpersonal relationships (eg negotiating persuasively, encouraging debate)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Personal development and mastery (eg demonstrating personal integrity)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Business and entrepreneurial skills (eg using marketing skills, adopting a client focus)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Staff development and empowerment (eg acknowledging good performance)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Other? *Please specify:*	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐

21. From your perspective as an executive or senior manager and leader in the VET sector, what management and leadership CAPABILITIES do frontline managers require in order to perform their management and leadership roles?

22. What PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT in management and leadership have you undertaken in the past few years? Please provide details of any programs or activities that were of special significance to you.

23. Various PROCESSES that might be used to assist the further DEVELOPMENT of managers and leaders in the VET sector are listed below. Please indicate your INTEREST in relation to each process. *Mark ONE box only for each statement.*

Processes	*Not at all Interested*		*Interested*		*Extremely Interested*	*Not Applicable*
Self-directed learning	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Work-based development projects	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Structured personal support (eg mentors and coaches)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Workshops/seminars/conferences	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Formal courses	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Informal learning (eg networking with peers)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Programs tailored to need (ie mix of options above)	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐
Other? *Please specify:*	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	☐

24. Have you any further COMMENTS to make about management and leadership in the VET sector?

25. Do you want a short SUMMARY of the project findings? ☐ Yes *(please provide contact details eg enclose a business card)* ☐ No

26. Are you willing to take part in a short follow-up telephone INTERVIEW? ☐ Yes *(please provide contact details)* ☐ No

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE. YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS VERY VALUABLE AND WE APPRECIATE IT. KINDLY RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM IN THE ENCLOSED, SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE. PLEASE ESTIMATE THE TIME IT TOOK TO COMPLETE IN MINUTES.

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